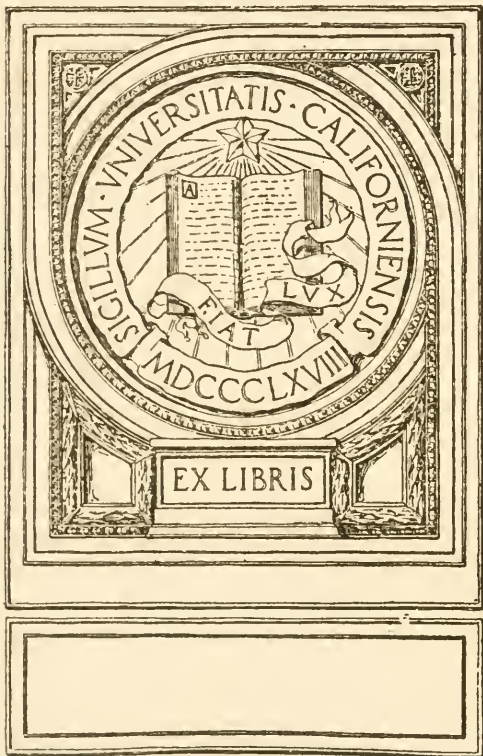


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JOSHUA MARVEL.

LONDON:

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JOSHUA MARVEL.

BY

B. L. FARJEON,

AUTHOR OF 'GRIF.'

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON :
TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18 CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

1871.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. III.



CHAP.	PAGE
I. JOSHUA IS PROMOTED	I
II. ON THE RAFT	16
III. SAVED FROM THE SEA	41
IV. ON THE ROCKS	79
V. BITTER REVELATIONS	89
VI. SURPRISED BY SAVAGES	113
VII. THE POWER OF MUSIC	137
VIII. HARSH JUDGMENTS	154
IX. MR. MARVEL SHAKES THE DUST FROM HIS FEET	174
X. SO NEAR, AND YET SO FAR	208
XI. FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH	232
XII. JOSHUA AND THE OLD WIZARD	247
XIII. FAITHFUL HEARTS	263

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JOSHUA MARVEL.



CHAPTER I.

JOSHUA IS PROMOTED.

WHEN daylight came—and O how they watched for it and prayed for it!—they saw clearly their great peril. The ship was rolling amongst a mass of sharp rocks jutting upwards from the sea. They saw the points of these rocks on all sides of them; but no friendly land was in view.

‘The ship is lost,’ said Captain Liddle to Joshua, whom he looked upon as his right-hand; ‘she is breaking up fast. Our next chance is the boats.’

It was a wonder indeed how the *Merry Andrew* had kept together during the night, with the tremendous beating she had received from the rocks;

if she had been in deep water, she must inevitably have sunk.

Joshua had told Captain Liddle of the understanding between Scadbolt and the Lascar, as overheard by Minnie; and now the Captain walked to where the two conspirators were standing in conversation with other sailors. Scadbolt was endeavouring to persuade them to seize the jolly boat, and leave the passengers to shift for themselves.

‘What is that you are saying?’ cried the Captain, breaking in amongst them, and grasping Scadbolt by the shoulder with a grasp of iron. ‘More incitings to mutiny! Take heed, sir! Give me but a little stronger cause—nay, dare to lay a finger upon boats or provisions without leave—and, by God, I’ll throw you into the sea!’

‘Will you stand this, men?’ shouted Scadbolt, writhing in the Captain’s grasp.

The Lascar made a movement towards the Captain, and the glitter of a knife flashed in the light; but a blow from Joshua sent him reeling, and in an instant the knife was torn from his hand.

‘Remember!’ said Joshua, in a low voice. ‘You had a lesson from me years ago. What the

Captain does to Seadbolt, I do to you, you treacherous cur.'

'I remember,' muttered the Lascar, presenting the singular aspect of a man cowed by fear and raging with furious passion at the same time. 'I swore to have your heart's blood, and I'll have it! Look you! the end has not yet come. Give me my knife!'

Joshua looked at the knife; it was one-bladed, with a clasp—one of the articles, indeed, which the Lascar had wrested from Solomon Fewster's fears.

'You asked me once before for a knife I took from you,' he said; 'then I broke it before I gave it back. But this—this, I mean to keep.'

'Now then, my men,' cried the Captain, in a cheery voice, 'this is the second time that this damned rascal has tried to step between you and me. What I feared then has happened now. The ship is breaking up, and can't hold together for many days, and if the weather gets worse, may break up in a day. There are certain chances in our favour, every one of which will be destroyed unless we act in friendly concert and like men. This scoundrel has tried to make you believe that your interests and the interests of the passengers are in opposition. He lies! I declare to you, as a

captain and a man' (if he had said a gentleman, all would have been ruined), 'that your lives and your safety are as dear to me as those of anybody else on board—except my wife,' he said softly yet stoutly, and murmurs of 'Bravo, skipper! Bravo! you're a man!' broke even from the lips of those sailors who were most disposed to be won over by Scadbolt. 'Well then, you hear me declare now, as I have declared before, that I mean you fair. And I declare moreover, that our only chance of safety is in union. Once again—With me! or Against me?'

'With you! with you, skipper!'

During this scene, Joshua did not know that Minnie was standing near him. Now, releasing the Lascar with warning words, he turned and saw her. She met his gaze unflinchingly, and a hot blush mantled over her neck and face. He gazed at her for so long a time, that she drooped her head before him, and stood in an attitude of pleading. But he could not doubt the evidence of his senses. Her manner, no less than her appearance, convinced him. It was Minnie, indeed, who stood before him.

He covered his eyes with his hand, and staggered to the saloon. If a thousand despairing and

undeserved deaths had stared him in the face, he could not have been more shocked and bewildered. He sat down and tried to think. What was the meaning of it? What did they know at home? What did they know! What might they suspect? He saw himself and the Old Sailor together in the boat at Gravesend, and heard that faithful old friend tell him of Minnie's love for him, and what it was his duty to do. He had seen his duty clearly then: love for Ellen, no less than duty—affection for his friend and brother, no less than love and duty—impelled him to the right and honourable course of making Ellen his wife. And then! Why, within three days of that consummation of his dearest hope, he and Minnie were together on board the *Merry Andrew*. If they at home knew it, suspected it even, must they not believe that his whole life was a monstrous lie? that he had planned, plotted, deceived, schemed, to prove how utterly false he was to the woman who adored him, to the man who believed in him, to the kind mother and father who loved him better than Benjamin was loved? For a few moments he lost all consciousness of present peril. The ship beat amongst the rocks; the seas dashed over the deck: he heard them not, felt them not.

He took from his breast Ellen's picture and the lock of hair she had given him at their parting, and kissed them again and again, while his tears ran on them. Strangely enough, there came to his ears then, in the midst of his agony, his father's hearty exultant voice, saying, 'This is better than being a wood-turner all one's life, isn't it, Josh?' He shivered, and sobbed and cried, 'O, Dan, Dan, do not forsake me!' and stretched forth his hands as if his friend were near. A hand upon his shoulder aroused him. He looked up, and saw the Captain's wife. She was a brave woman, and had done much during the night to sustain the courage of the others.

'There is a man's work to do on deck,' she said to him gravely and sweetly. 'You are not growing faint-hearted?'

'No, my lady,' he answered, 'not faint-hearted at the prospect of death; but I have received a shock worse than death.'

She did not stop to ask for an explanation of his meaning—time was too precious; but she took the picture of Ellen and looked at it.

'My wife, my lady,' he said, with a sob.

A troubled expression crossed her features, and she said encouragingly,

‘Nay, all hope is not gone; we may succeed in reaching land, or some ship may see us and pick us up. But all private grief must give way now for the general good. There are not too many faithful men on board; the lives of others depend on them. If they lose heart, and yield to the selfishness of their grief, we are lost.’

Joshua jumped to his feet and wiped his tears.

‘They are not unmanly tears, my lady,’ he said bravely; ‘I can justify them to you when there is no pressing work to do. Thank you for calling me to my duty.’

She smiled brightly on him and shook hands with him. When he got on deck, the Captain was giving orders to lower the jolly boat; but as the boat was being lowered, the broken water caught her and splintered her to pieces. The sailors and passengers looked with dismay at the fragments of the boat drifting away and dashing against the jagged rocks. ‘What next?’ they all thought.

‘Try the long boat, men,’ cried the Captain. And in accordance with his instructions, the long boat—the only one left—was launched over the vessel’s side; but as she hung in the tackle, a huge wave dashed up and filled her. It was

imperative that the water should be baled out of her.

‘Who will do it?’ asked the Captain, loath to give an order in which there was almost certain death. Joshua was about to start forward, when Minnie’s hand upon his arm restrained him. Before he could shake off the grasp, the first-mate, crying, ‘I’m a single man; I’ve no wife and children waiting for me at home!’ jumped into the boat up to his waist in water, and began to bale it out. But he had not baled out a dozen gallons when the stern-post was jerked out of the boat, which was left hanging in the tackle. The shouts of the men and the screams of the women apprised him of his danger; and as he looked about to see how he could remedy the disaster, the fore-tackle got adrift, and the boat was battling with cruel rocks and water. The force of the current was too powerful for her. The Captain threw out lines to the unfortunate man, but he could not catch them. But if he had, he would have been bruised to death by the sharp rocks. The moment before he went down, he waved a good-bye to those on board. A long silence followed. The women looked anxiously at the Captain, but saw no hope in his face. Then with a gesture to all

to follow him, he went down to the saloon, and there read prayers, and commended them to God. He was not what is understood as a religious man; but knowing the danger in which they stood, he conceived this to be a duty. That done, he said, ‘Men and passengers, we have one chance left, and only one. Out of our masts and spars we can make a raft sufficiently large to hold all of us. Then we may be able to reach some friendly land. To stay on board and wait, and not work, is certain death. Even as it is, a raft will take us some days to make, and the ship may break to pieces before it is done. But we must trust to God for that. What *we’ve* got to do is to work like men, for our own sakes, for the sake of the women, and for the sake of wives and children at home. Some of you have these, I know. It is not for me, now that we are in such a strait, to say, Do this, or Do that; although under any circumstances I shall insist upon discipline and order. I can’t make you work, and therefore I submit for your approval the plan I think best for general safety. Have any of you a better one to propose?’

‘No, no!’ was the unanimous cry.

‘Very well; then we’ll determine upon this.

And for the better carrying out of our design, I appoint Mr. Marvel second in command. He is first-mate now. If anything happens to me, you will look to him. When the raft is made, and safely launched—if it please God that it shall be so—we will set down necessary rules for all on board. Until that time there is but one rule—to work. Every man on board must work—passengers and all; and every man must aid me in preserving order.’

The Captain’s manly speech infused hope into every heart; and exclamations of ‘Good!’ ‘Bravo, skipper!’ ‘Well said, sir!’ followed his last words.

‘One other thing,’ he said, in a more determined voice: ‘to my certain knowledge, we have unfortunately among us two men who have endeavoured to spread dissatisfaction and add to our confusion. I will not point out these men; they are known to me and all of you. They are men, though, as we are, so far as the value of life to each of us goes; and it is only fair that they should have equal chances with us. But this I declare, by my dear wife’s life! If these men do not work, and if they attempt anything that is not for the general good, I will shoot them with my own hand! Now then, to the deck!’

Not a man among them who did not take off his coat and set to work with a will. There were a great many loose spars on board, which, with the mizenmast, were found to be sufficient for their purpose. They tried to cut down the mainmast; but there was so much danger in the attempt, that it was relinquished. For three days they worked like slaves. The rocks served as a resting-place for the ends of the largest spars, which were firmly lashed together and nailed; the light and short spars were used for the centre of the raft, upon which a kind of platform was raised on which many of the shipwrecked persons could lie out of the water; a mast to carry sails was also rigged up. The raft was not finished too soon; they could not have stopped another day on the ship. While the work was going on, three of the sailors lost their lives, so that already their number was lessened by four. The raft being ready, it was launched with great difficulty. The next anxious question was provisions; and the result of their inquiry blanched many a cheek. All the bread was spoilt by the salt water, and most of the preserved meat had been lost, in consequence of having been brought on deck when they tried to launch the boats. They also made another dis-

heartening discovery. They could only find two small kegs to hold water. Still, when the first shock of these discoveries was over, they were borne bravely, almost cheerfully. The women, excepting Rachel Homebush, were the cause of this; they smiled upon the workers, encouraged them, and made them hopeful in spite of themselves. Even Mrs. Pigeon recovered some of her good spirits; and knowing that her merry laugh was a comfort to the men, she laughed often when she was not inclined for mirth. The little child, Emma, was the only truly happy one of the party, and her presence drove away many a hard thought. Rough-and-Ready had his anxious intervals, but he worked with a will. Between him and Joshua a strong attachment sprung up; each admired the manliness of the other. He was also particularly kind to Minnie, and she grew accustomed to look upon him with confidence and to trust in him. The night before the raft was launched, Joshua persuaded Captain Liddle to take a night's rest.

‘It will be all the better for you and all of us, sir,’ said Joshua.

‘But you too, Marvel,’ said Captain Liddle, ‘you want rest as much as I. I don’t believe you have had two hours’ sleep since we struck.’ This

was really true: both Joshua and the Captain had been indefatigable.

‘Never mind me, sir,’ said Joshua, with a sad sweet smile. ‘You have your wife to attend to. Besides, I promise that I will rest to - morrow night, if you will give me leave.’

‘You are a noble fellow, Marvel;’ and Captain Liddle gazed admiringly at the young sailor. ‘I have often wondered how you acquired certain qualities that are not common to the ordinary sailor.’

‘I don’t know, sir; I doubt if they were ever in me. They must have been put there by my friend Dan, who is nobleness itself.’

‘Dan? Ah, the lame boy with the wonderful birds, that I saw at your house. I liked his face.’

‘He is the dearest fellow’——Joshua turned away his head.

The next day the provisions and the charts and instruments, and many things that would be useful, such as blankets, tools, and writing materials, were stowed safely on the raft. Of the provisions there was a very small store: twenty tins of preserved meat, a small quantity of sugar, about a gallon of rum, and two kegs of water. By

the time everything useful was stowed away and secured, and the passengers were safely on the raft, it was evening, and within three hours the Merry Andrew broke completely up. The raft (having parted its moorings), forced by the strong current, was carried to sea, and the passengers watched the last of the ship with unmixed feelings of sadness. The women shed tears, and all of them, men and women, felt as if they had lost a friend. When the vessel was out of sight, a stronger feeling of desolation stole upon the unhappy group, and Rough-and-Ready had many looks of astonishment cast upon him as he rubbed his hands and said in a cheerful voice, 'This is splendid. Now we can be comfortable.' But it was well for them that they had some stout hearts on board.

The direct allusion made by Captain Liddle to Scadbolt and the Lascar had had its effect upon those worthies; they knew that their lives depended upon their conduct. But they found means to exchange confidences, and they resolved to revenge themselves on both Joshua and the Captain when opportunity served. 'Wait till we make land,' said Scadbolt; 'they shall smart then, the pair of them. I'll teach both of them the meaning of "general good!"' The Lascar's old

feeling of hate for Joshua had been revived in all its intensity by the late scene between them.

‘I’ll have my knife back,’ he muttered to himself as he lay on the raft the first night, at a little distance from Joshua, watching him with venomous looks, ‘and his heart’s blood with it.’

Not a movement, not a glance, escaped Minnie’s notice. Aware of the feelings of hate entertained by the Lascar for Joshua, she set herself the task of watching over Joshua’s safety. He, overpowered by fatigue, had been persuaded by the Captain to take some sleep, and when he lay down Minnie crept to his side and remained there during the night. He slept long and peacefully through the solemn night and after the gray morning had dawned, dreaming of home, of Dan and Ellen, and murmuring their names with a smile upon his lips.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE RAFT.

JOSHUA, opening his eyes, saw Minnie sitting by his side. She, seeing that he was awake, moved quietly away without a word, and went to where the other women were lying. He had been so fatigued when he lay down to rest, that his sleep had been very profound; and when he awoke, the full sense of his situation did not come upon him. Minnie, sitting by his side with her brown face and short curls, was the first thing he saw; and it seemed to him for a brief space that he was dreaming. But when she moved away and joined the other women, he remembered the perils they had encountered, and the terrible position in which they were placed. He would have called to her, but that some feeling restrained him; and although he thought much of her during the day, he was glad that he had not spoken to her. Besides, his attention was diverted for a time to

another circumstance. Some of the men were clamouring for breakfast. Neither Scadbolt nor the Lascar was among the murmurers; these last consisted of the weakest of the party, who were less able than the others to bear hunger, and to whom the fear of starvation made it appear as if they had been already fasting a day.

‘Breakfast! breakfast!’ they cried.

‘Wait till ten o’clock,’ said the Captain, in a stern determined voice; ‘you can’t be hungry already. If you don’t cease murmuring, I will put off breakfast until twelve.’

This threat silenced them.

In the mean time the Captain called his council together, and consulted with them. There were four in the council: himself, Joshua, Rough-and-Ready, and an old sailor named Standish, who had been wrecked twice before, and who consequently was looked upon as a distinguished personage. At eight o’clock the Captain read prayers. Then the men, with the exception of the council, sat idly watching the water, and looking out for a fish. The morning was fine; one of the sailors noted for quaint sayings remarked that the weather had no business to be fine; it was a mockery. At ten o’clock the Captain piped

all hands; the call was answered readily, but there were no signs of breakfast.

‘Be seated,’ said the Captain.

They all sat down, with the exception of the Captain and his three counsellors. The Captain stood in front, his supporters behind.

‘We who stand,’ said the Captain, ‘have been constituted by me, commander of this ship, into a council for the discussion and deliberation of all matters relating to the general welfare. The fairness of the selection will recommend itself to the crew, for the council is composed of three sailors and one passenger. Are you content?’

‘Yes, yes!’ cried a large number.

Up rose Scadbolt.

‘Let us hear first what you have to say about the provisions,’ he said. ‘I am not one who says yes without consideration.’

‘That’s fair too,’ broke from half-a-dozen throats.

Captain Liddle eyed Scadbolt steadily. Scadbolt returned his gaze. He knew that, in the position he had assumed, he could command the sympathies of a certain number, and the knowledge gave him confidence.

‘Well, it *is* fair,’ said the Captain; ‘and a

reasonable suggestion is always reasonable, never mind who makes it. The council have drawn out a set of rules this morning, which I have here writ down on paper. If you approve of them, you will approve of the council; do I understand that?’

‘Yes, yes!’

The Captain produced his paper and commenced.

‘Rule 1. All questions in dispute, with the exception of such as are properly within the province of the duties of Captain Liddle—whose orders, as Captain of the *Merry Andrew*, we promise to obey and uphold to the death—shall be decided by the majority.’

‘Agreed!’ some cried.

‘Stop!’ exclaimed Scadbolt; ‘how about the women? We are not going to let them vote.’

Thought Captain Liddle, ‘This is no common scoundrel; he puts in speech what many a malcontent would only dare to think.’ Said Captain Liddle aloud, ‘That was not mentioned by the council. I don’t suppose the women would wish to vote; a proper man would not have mentioned it. Decided, however, that the women do not vote.’

In arguing with Scadbolt, Captain Liddle

committed a grave mistake: it put them upon a kind of equality, and from that moment Scadbolt could boast of being the leader of a party, small as it might be.

‘Rule 2,’ continued Captain Liddle. ‘The small stock of provisions shall be equally divided between every soul on board——’

A little faint cheering here broke out.

‘—— But, in consequence of the smallness of the supply, the quantity to be measured out to each person shall be regulated, as occasion demands, by the Captain and his council.’

No demur was made to this.

‘Rule 3. That all fish, birds, or food of any kind which may be found in air or water shall be added to the general stock, and shall be fairly and equally divided.’

‘Unfair!’ exclaimed Scadbolt; ‘each man is entitled to what he can catch in air or water.’

‘Not so,’ replied the Captain; ‘for what then would become of the women?—Men, I appeal to you: does this man, who speaks while you are silent, represent your views?’

Two or three voices answered, ‘Yes;’ a score answered, ‘No.’

‘Good,’ said the Captain; ‘he represents but

one in a dozen ; and even the two or three of you who seem to side with him may be brought to see the selfishness of what he advocates. If he had his way, the weak would be left to die ; the strong alone should live, and have a chance of being saved. Is this fair ? is it manly ? is it honest ?

‘ Every man for himself, and God for us all,’ muttered Scadbolt, trying to fan the flame.

‘ Then the strongest man would crush the rest, and might would take the place of right,’ continued the Captain, beginning to see that he had made a mistake in listening so patiently to Scadbolt. ‘ We were never nearer to death than we are this day ; but shall that make us forget that we are men ? Shall that turn us into brutes ? We have helpless women depending upon us, and upon our manliness. They shall be shown no favour in the way of provisions ; they shall divide equally with us, share and share alike. But, by God, the one who seeks to deny them their fair chance of life, dies by my hand !’

‘ I am with you, Captain,’ cried Rough-and-Ready.

‘ And I,’ said Joshua.

‘ And I,’ said the sailor who had been twice wrecked.

‘And I,’ ‘And I,’ from most of the rest.

‘Decided, then, that all food that may be found in air or water shall be added to the general stock, and shall be fairly and equally divided.’

Scadbolt did not dare demur.

‘Rule 4. That, recognising the full extent of our dread peril, and knowing that death stares us in the face, we resolve to die like men, if it be God’s will; and thus resolving, we solemnly declare that, supposing all our food be gone, we will not eat human flesh——’

A shudder ran round the attentive group, and Mrs. Pigeon fainted; but Captain Liddle proceeded firmly,

‘—— Nor draw lots as to who shall be killed to feed the rest. This we solemnly resolve, in fear of the Lord, out of common humanity, and out of respect for ourselves as Christian men.’

Assented to in silence; not one of them could realise the horrible craving, born of raging thirst and hunger, that had come upon men in such a strait as theirs.

‘That is all,’ concluded the Captain after a long pause. ‘You approve, then, of the council and these rules?’

‘Yes.’

‘Now to breakfast. Water, for the first week, will be served out twice a day—a quarter of a pint in the morning, and a quarter of a pint in the evening—half a pint a day to each person. Of food we have only preserved meat and sugar, and very little of either. One table-spoonful of preserved meat will be served out to each person at eleven o’clock every morning, and at five o’clock one ounce of sugar. Of rum we have about a gallon: a teaspoonful will be served out to each person once in every other day, in the morning or in the evening, as he may choose. The general stock of provisions will not be touched by any one on board, except in presence of all, and it will be guarded by two of the council; the penalty of tampering with the stock, or of attempting to steal any portion of it, will be death. And God give us strength, and send us happy deliverance!’

When breakfast was served, the men lay about the raft idly, watching the water for fish, which they were not successful in catching, and rising every now and then to scan the horizon for a sail. Some slept or tried to sleep; some talked over the chances of deliverance; some spoke in whis-

pers of what they had heard from men who had been wrecked. While the provisions were being measured by the Captain, the other three of the council stood by with cocked pistols, ready to fire should a rush be made. Most of the men took their spoonful of preserved meat, and ate it quickly and greedily, some of them at one gulp; but a few, wiser than their fellows, retired with their portion, and sitting down, ate it very slowly. These last were the best satisfied. The council were busy enough all the day; assisted by Mr. Pigeon and the two friends, Wall and Heartsease, they were employed in rearranging everything on the raft, and in making things more comfortable for the women. A kind of low tent was built, under cover of which the women could lie down and rest, screened from the men; but it was only used at night; for at first the women mixed with the men during the day, and made themselves useful. Mrs. Pigeon, of her own accord, crept to where the sailors were lying about, and asked if they wanted anything mended. At first they were too surprised to reply; but presently a dozen voices answered her. One wanted a pair of socks darned; another had half-a-dozen rents in his shirt; and in a very little while Mrs. Pigeon's

hands were full. She made her way back to her female companions, and throwing a heap of clothes in the midst of them, proposed that they should set to work at once. Soon all of them, with the exception of Rachel Homebush, were busily and cheerfully at work; and while their fingers were plying, Mrs. Pigeon sang snatches of songs. It was as little like a picture of shipwrecked persons as one could imagine. But it was a picture that did an immense amount of good. The men looked at the women admiringly, and Rough-and-Ready's eyes glistened every time they wandered that way.

‘A pretty bunch!’ he observed to Joshua.

Joshua nodded hopefully, for the sight cheered him.

‘That’s a good little woman of yours,’ said Rough-and-Ready, turning to Mr. Pigeon. Rough-and-Ready held a very different position now from what he did when he first stepped aboard the *Merry Andrew*; he was a general favourite with men and women. Even Rachel Homebush cast glances of approval at him.

‘I tell you what,’ answered Mr. Pigeon in a confidential tone; ‘I’ve not seen much of women—you know out there in the bush they’re ra-

ther scarce—and we had some hope of getting home——’

‘*Had* some hope!’ interrupted Rough-and-Ready. ‘Say *have* some hope. If there’s one thing in the world that makes me certain of it, it is that picture there,’ pointing to the women.

‘I am heartily glad to hear you say so. *Have* some hope, then, of getting home, where the streets are crowded with women, they say. But there isn’t one among ’em to come up to her. Although there were not half-a-dozen lasses to choose from when I first made up to her, I’d choose her now out of a million.’

Having delivered himself of these, his articles of faith in his wife, he sat down by her side, and held her cotton for her as she stitched and sewed.

Meantime the current and their one sail carried them along at the rate of about two miles an hour. No land was in sight, and there was no sign of a ship, although during the day many a false alarm was given. The weather remained fine. The light wind died away in the evening, when the thin crescent of a new moon came out in the sky. It was welcomed as a good omen; and the women looked at it, and smiled at one

another, the foolish things! as if the silver crescent were a messenger of good tidings. Then the stars came out brightly—another good omen. Many a one on the raft thought, ‘This is better than being jammed on the rocks in the *Merry Andrew*; we are moving towards safety. If we do not see a ship, we may see land, and may manage to get ashore.’ References were made to *Robinson Crusoe* and the *Swiss Family Robinson*; not in a gloomy, but in a cheerful spirit. It was the admirable bearing of the men in command, no less than the virtues of the women, that contributed to this state of hopeful feeling. The sailors were also comparatively contented; most of them had a little stock of tobacco—some more, some less—the chewing of which gave them comfort. Each man hoarded his store more jealously than a miser hoards his gold; but some were greedier than others, or craved for it more, and could not withstand the temptation of chewing it almost wastefully, certainly not prudently. But then sailors are not a prudent class of men.

To Joshua, who was sitting musing of home, came *Rough-and-Ready*, and sat beside him.

‘You don’t smoke?’ asked *Rough-and-Ready*.

‘No.’

‘That’s not sailor-like.’

Joshua shrugged his shoulders, and smiled.

‘Nor chew?’

‘No.’

‘Here is a little piece of tobacco. Chew it.’

Joshua put it in his mouth and chewed it, because he thought it was, after all, a certain kind of food, and might make him less hungry. But it made him sick.

Rough-and-Ready laughed a little when he saw the effect of it, and presently said, so that no one else should hear, ‘You must learn to chew.’

‘Why?’

‘It will help to keep you alive when the provisions run out. I have a dozen pounds of tobacco strapped round me; it was my own, so I thought I had a right to it. By and by it will come in handy. I wish I could teach the women to chew.’

‘If the men knew you had so much,’ said Joshua, ‘your life would not be safe.’

‘I know that. I had an idea at first of handing it to the skipper for general use; but I thought better of it. There are a few on board to whom I don’t think I’d give an ounce to save their lives. What is that in your handkerchief?’

‘My accordion.’

‘Do you play? Of course, though, or you wouldn’t have it. I should like to hear some music.’

Joshua untied his handkerchief and took out his accordion. The night was very still, and the soft tones floated in the air, and seemed to linger about the raft as it glided through the sea. The quiet bubbling of the water as it stole through the openings between the spars, as if in sport, was in consonance with the melody and the still night and the beautiful peaceful heavens. Men who were lying at full length sat up when the music commenced, and were the better for it. The women crept from out their shelter, and listened and shed tears, not entirely unhappy. Surely it was a night of good omens. As Joshua played, his thoughts wandered back to his boyish life, and to the tender conversations that had taken place between him and Dan. Often he stopped as he mused and thought; but presently his fingers would be on the keys again, playing a few bars of ‘Poor Tom Bowling,’ and other more cheerful songs of Dibdin, which the Old Sailor loved so well. They came back to him, the memories of that happy time. Their anxiety about their birds,

when they first commenced to train them; the death of Golden Cloud, and the after conversation which he had never forgotten, in the course of which they had read together of the wreck of Robinson Crusoe. Why, it seemed all to have come true! Here he was, wrecked, certainly not alone, and therefore better off than Crusoe was, but wrecked for all that. But under what circumstances, and with what a dreadful web of suspicion surrounding him! O, if he could see the end of it! It was horrible to think that he might die—he and all of them on the raft; and that Dan might believe him false because of Minnie. It would not bear thinking of. He ceased playing, and bathed his fevered head and face. Often and often had he said to himself, in former storms and former scenes, the words that Dan had impressed upon him; and now he tried to fancy that Dan could see him, and knew that he was true.

Rough-and-Ready, seeing that Joshua was engrossed in thought, did not disturb him, and presently dozed off. How long he had been asleep he did not know; but he woke up with a curious impression upon him. He must have slept long, for the night was far advanced, and no sound was

heard but the plashing of the water against and through the spars. The impression was this: that he and Joshua were lying side by side (as, in fact, they were) asleep, and that a woman suddenly came between them. Her back was to him, her face turned to Joshua; that she sat down so, and so remained, for an hour and more, making no movement, uttering no sound; but he could tell that all the while she was watching Joshua's sleeping form. That then she inclined herself gently to Joshua, and pressed her lips to his hand; and that, rising to go, she turned her face to Rough-and-Ready, and he saw that it was Mrs. Liddle's gipsy-maid. So far his fancies went. Starting into a sitting position, he saw Minnie a few paces from him, making her way to where the women were lying.

Now this set Rough-and-Ready thinking—for more reasons than one. Had he been dreaming, or had it really occurred? If it had occurred, it must have been love that prompted her. He had observed her the previous night sitting near Joshua; but then it had not been so noticeable, for there was no kind of order on the raft. How long had she known Joshua? He was the more perplexed because he had never seen the two in con-

versation, and because of the mystery surrounding the acquaintance. He was troubled too ; for rough as he was, and old enough to be Minnie's father, he had taken a tender interest in her, and the discovery he had just made came upon him like a shock.

Every person on the raft was asleep with the exception of the men in the watch and himself. He did not feel inclined to lie down again, so he sat and thought of things. In such a solemn scene and at such solemn moments the spirit of nature works wonders in the minds of the roughest men—quickens the sympathies, and stirs into life the tenderest memories. It was so with Rough-and-Ready at the present time. Incidents in his life which had been so long unremembered that he wondered how he thought of them now, came vividly before him. His home—his mother—small domestic joys and griefs—a brother who died when they were both children, with whom he used to play and pelt with daisies—— Good God ! what kind of a bridge was that in his life that spanned that time and this ? By what strange steps had he walked from then to now ? The stars grew less bright and paled out of the skies ; the water grew grayer in the brief space before the

morning's dawn. Soon in the east a thin line of water at the edge of the horizon quickened into life, and Nature's grandest wonder began to work in the dawning of a new day. The water-line, a mere thread at first, but broadening with every second that marked the flight of gray shadows, was rosy with blushing light. Purple clouds, fringed with wondrous colours, surrounded the clear space, in which presently the glorious sun rose grandly from the golden bed of waters; and as it rose, sky and sea rejoiced. At one time, for a few moments, the sea was like a field of golden corn waving in the sun's eye; but soon it deepened, till it and the heavens, that looked down into its mighty depths, were filled with flaming restless light, which in their turn gave way to softer shadows. Many a sunrise had Rough-and-Ready seen, but never one that he had watched so steadily as this; but it seemed as if his thoughts were in harmony with it.

Late in the day, Rough-and-Ready asked Joshua how long he had known Mrs. Liddle's maid. Joshua looked at him curiously, but did not reply. He had not spoken to Minnie since they had been on the raft, and had indeed taken pains to avoid her. She did not intrude herself upon him; she

submitted in patience to the silence he imposed upon her by his manner. But a strange phenomenon took place in her. While the others grew weaker and paler and more unhappy, she seemed to gather fresh strength, and actually grew rosier and more hardy. The dark colour too was dying out of her face.

‘I have a reason for asking,’ said Rough-and-Ready, as an excuse for his question.

Joshua nodded, not unkindly, but with a troubled face.

‘There is a strange story connected with your question,’ he said; ‘so strange and so painful, that I cannot give you an answer.’

‘I thought there was some mystery in the affair,’ observed Rough-and-Ready; ‘but I will not press upon your confidence. Do you know that the night before last, she watched by you the whole time you were asleep?’

‘Watched by me!’

‘Ay. And last night too for some time—I don’t know for how long.’

Joshua gave Rough-and-Ready an amazed look, and turned away to where Minnie was sitting. She saw him coming towards her, and her heart beat fast.

‘Why have you watched near me for two nights?’ he asked, without looking at her.

‘You have enemies on the raft,’ was the answer, very quietly given.

‘I know: Scadbolt and the Lascar. But I can take care of myself.’

‘Not when you are asleep,’ she said, almost in a whisper.

What could he do? What could he say? Together on the raft, in the presence of Death, from which only something very like a miracle could save them, could he be stern and harsh to her? And his great misery was, that he knew and felt his power. He knew that an unkind word from him to this young girl was as bitter as death could be.

‘You are like the rest of us, I suppose,’ he said gently; ‘growing very weak.’

‘I do not think so,’ she answered, trembling at the gentleness of his voice; ‘I feel strong as yet. Shall we be saved?’

‘We are in God’s hands,’ he said. ‘I think there is but little chance of being picked up, or even of making friendly land.’

Neither addressed the other by name.

‘If the end comes, and you know it, and I am

not near you, will you try and find me, and say a kind word to me before I die ?'

He gave her the promise, and hurried suddenly from her, for his heart was fit to break, and he dared not trust himself to say more.

The third day passed, and the fourth. No sign of succour near. Hope began to die.

On the sixth morning, when the roll was called, one of the passengers did not answer to his name. It was Mr. Bracegirdle.

'He is asleep,' said one.

They shook him, but he did not move. He was dead. This was the first death, and it affected them deeply. Before he was sewn in the canvas, he was searched, in the anticipation of finding something useful. A surprising discovery was then made. He had in his pocket-book and round his waist bank-notes and bills for more than ten thousand pounds. But nobody knew anything about him ; he died, as he had lived among them, a mystery. After his body was slipped into the sea, a whisper went about that the money found on him had not been honestly come by.

That same night two sailors were washed into the sea. When it became known, there were some among them who secretly rejoiced in the

thought that there would not be so many mouths to feed. Nearly a third of the provisions was eaten, and the women were very weak. Little Emma Pigeon held out the best; but that was because her mother, from even her small portion, gave some to her child between the times of serving out the provisions; the child also was petted and nourished by the other women. Rough-and-Ready was especially considerate to the females. Joshua saw him chewing something, and wondered what it was. Noticing the look of inquiry on Joshua's face, Rough-and-Ready enlightened him.

‘I am eating leather,’ he said.

Joshua stared at him. Then Rough-and-Ready took from his pocket a dozen very thin strips of leather which he had cut out of his boot, and told Joshua that he had found a new food. He gave Joshua a couple of strips—very thin they were, almost like a wafer—and Joshua set to work on them, and after some difficulty, chewed them to a pulp and swallowed them.

‘There's nothing like leather,’ said Rough-and-Ready with a quiet laugh. ‘It wants strong teeth, but it fills up an empty place in the stomach.’

The next day Joshua noticed that Rough-and-

Ready received his tablespoonful of preserved meat in his handkerchief, and later on he saw Rough-and-Ready slyly feeding little Emma with a portion of the meat, and then go to her mother and slip what remained into her hand.

Now and then a few small fish were caught. There being no means of cooking them, the women refused their share with horror, but the men ate them raw. They also snared some birds, and ate them in the same manner.

On the twelfth night Scadbolt and the Lascar lay side by side awake. Nearer than they, to the edge of the raft lay a shipmate, chewing tobacco.

‘All mine is gone,’ said Scadbolt enviously.

‘And mine,’ said the Lascar, with a horrible look at the man who was chewing.

‘I think he must have a good lot left. I heard him boast of it last week.’

‘Two men are better than one.’

‘Wait till that black cloud touches the moon; then stop his mouth; I’ll do the rest!’

The black cloud travelled on and on, crept before the moon, and soon shut out its light. When the moon shone again upon the waters there was one man less on the raft, and Scadbolt and the Lascar were chewing tobacco greedily!

These two men had a line out in the water, with a small hook at the end of it. The Lascar felt it jerk. He pulled in the line; there was a fish at the end of it, weighing more than a pound. He took from his pocket a six-bladed knife, opened the largest blade, and cut the fish in two equal parts. He gave one to Scadbolt, and ate the other himself. So that they should not be observed, they lay down on their faces while they ate.

‘That was a good bit of luck,’ said Scadbolt; ‘I feel stronger.’

‘If the skipper caught us, he would throw us overboard,’ whispered the Lascar.

‘He’d try to; but one man is as good as another now. Let us do this and take care of ourselves; we shall outlast the others. I wish they were all dead—all but two.’

‘Ay, Joshua Marvel’s one. I know what you mean. You’d like to have the doing of him. So would I. Who’s the other?’

‘The gipsy-maid. She’s a rare beauty.’

The Lascar did not say anything to this. He had seen enough since they had been on the raft to convince him that his first suspicions were right, and that the gipsy-looking girl really was

Minnie. Notwithstanding their desperate condition, he had cast many admiring glances at her.

‘How fine,’ he thought, ‘to strike at Joshua Marvel through her!’

CHAPTER III.

SAVED FROM THE SEA.

THE first among the passengers to completely give way was Steven Homebush. He had observed no manner of discretion in eating his food, and had always swallowed it hastily, so that it did him but little good. Contrary to what might have been expected of him as a man of pious parts, he was the most selfish of all the passengers. Instead of praying for mercy, he rebelled in thought and speech against the misfortune which had overtaken him. He did not think of the others. It was *his* fate that was so hard. The prayers that he had so liberally offered up for other lost men were not for him now that he was lost. All other men were sinners,—so he had preached. There was no grace in any of them. He came to impart it to them. Let them open their rebellious hearts, and receive it, while there was yet time. To all kinds of men had he

preached this, striking at them hard, trying to frighten them with threatened penalties if they refused to believe as he believed. He came to give them grace ; did he himself require none ?

What kind of faith is that which believes all other faiths wrong and sinful ? What is the test of faith ? Sincerity ? Ay, for me ; but not for you. *I am sincere ; I am born in the grace of God.* But you ! Fall down and repent !

Such had been the preaching of Steven Homebush. But now that the earth was crumbling from beneath his feet, and the New Life was before him, he prayed neither for others nor for himself. He maintained a sullen rebellious silence, faithful to his nature for the first time in his life. His mood, no less than the scanty supply of food and his manner of eating it, drove him mad ; and within a fortnight of his sojourn on the raft, he was crawling and staggering about, uttering a dreadful jumble of prayers and blasphemies. His sister Rachel attended to him as well as her strength allowed her ; but he struck at her often, and often cursed her and himself. It was terrible to see and hear. He did not suffer long. One day he ran from one part of the raft to another, raving that a sail was in sight. At first

they thought that he might be right, but they soon discovered that he was raving. But *he* saw the ship coming nearer and nearer. His sister was the only one who had patience to bear with him. He described the ship to her, and described the men and women that were on the deck; and she shuddered as she recognised in his descriptions acquaintances and relatives every one of whom was dead.

‘Here it comes,’ he said, standing up in his eagerness, ‘nearer—nearer! I shall be able to jump on board presently.’

She strove to restrain him; but he broke from her wildly, and gave a leap on to the imaginary ship. He sank at once, and was seen no more.

The forlorn woman sat stupefied, and never moved. Hours afterwards, Rough-and-Ready, taking pity upon her condition, spoke to her, and bade her take comfort. The sense of what he said was lost to her, but she understood the sympathy that was expressed in his voice, and she looked at him gratefully while the tears rolled down her face. He placed his hand upon her shoulder, and said gently, ‘Poor woman! poor woman!’ She took his hand in hers, and clung to it, as if her only hope of life was there. He

could not disengage his hand except by force ; so he sat by her for an hour and more, until she released him. Then he crept to where the women were lying ; there was comfort in being close to them.

One of their most frightful experiences was the sight of the sharks snapping at the bodies as they were thrown into the sea. A great number of these creatures followed the raft day and night, scenting their prey. Each of the unfortunates thought, as he saw the sharks tearing at the body of his fellow creature, 'Perhaps it is my turn next.' About the twentieth day they caught at least a dozen rock cod, but after that they caught no fish for many days. Soon their fresh water was nearly gone ; for some time past they had only half a pint a day ; now the quantity was reduced to a quarter of a pint. Some tins of the preserved meat were also found to be putrid : the women could not touch it ; but a few of the sailors, Scadbolt and the Lascar among them, devoured it greedily. When another new moon rose, the courage of nearly every one of them was gone ; hope had fled too. They looked upon themselves as doomed.

A curious conversation took place between the

two friends, Harry Wall and James Heartsease. In the morning they had refused their portion of food.

‘ Save it for the women, sir,’ they said to the Captain.

He expostulated with them, and tried to prevail upon them to take it, but he did not succeed.

‘ Sir,’ said James Heartsease, ‘ we are going to lie down to die. We both of us feel that our time has come. To rob the poor women of any more food would be simple barbarity. I should like to shake hands with you.’

Captain Liddle shook hands with them; and after that they crawled to the women, and shook hands with them, and kissed little Emma Pigeon. Then they crawled away, and lay down side by side.

‘ The end has come, Jim,’ said Harry.

‘ All right, Hal,’ said James; ‘ it is only a matter of a few years—perhaps not so long as that. If we had had plenty to eat, it might have come just the same. After all, what is time? Draw a breath, and it is gone. It isn’t so hard to give up a few years when you think of that. Besides—’ But here he paused.

‘ Besides what, Jim?’

‘ We are alone; we have no women-ties—no

wives, no sweethearts. If we had, I think we should both try to live as long as we could.'

'I think so too. 'Tis a good job we are alone in the world.'

'Did you notice the women, Hal? I don't think they'll last long.'

'One of them won't,' said Harry. 'Mrs. Pigeon will soon go. Well, you know the reason of that.'

'Yes; she gives all her food to her little girl. Women are good creatures, Hal.'

'Such as she are. Jim, old boy, a sudden weakness has come over me. Put your face closer to mine—I want to kiss you. Good old boy—good old boy!'

They did not speak for some time after that. Heartsease was the first to break silence.

'Hal, old fellow,' he said, 'we shall meet somewhere by and by.'

'Sure to,' said Harry; 'somewhere, somehow. It is awfully grand to think of—it is good to believe. I am glad I never did any great wrong to sting me now. Jim, depend upon it, there is only one true religion; that is, the religion of being kind and tender and unselfish—the religion of doing unto others as you would others should

do unto you, and of living a good life. Give me the man who does that, and who believes in the goodness and greatness of God. All the rest is mummery. We have agreed upon that, haven't we, old boy ?'

'Ay, times out of mind.'

'Now, I tell you what I am going to do. I don't want to quite starve to death—it would be too painful; it's frightful to bear even now. I don't want to commit suicide, although to throw oneself into the water just now would be, in a certain measure, justifiable. I am going to draw myself close to the edge of the raft; then I am going to sleep. If the waves should chance to wash me over in the night—good! Let them; then I shall know something.'

'All right, Hal; I'll lie by your side. Good-night, old fellow.'

'Good-night.'

When the sun rose again, those two good friends had gone to their rest, to meet again Somewhere—Somehow!

So day after day passed, and their numbers continued to grow fewer, until there were no more than eighteen on the raft. In the first quarter of the second new moon—that is, when they had

been on the raft for more than thirty days—Mrs. Pigeon died. When the news went round, there were few dry eyes among the poor creatures. Every one loved her, even to Scadbolt and the Lascar, whose clothes she had mended. It was a wonder how she had lasted so long, for it was with the greatest difficulty she could be prevailed upon to take food; she gave it all to her little daughter. When, almost by force, a small portion had been put into her mouth, Joshua had seen her take it out to feed little Emma. That is why the child lived while the mother starved to death. Between Mrs. Pigeon and Minnie a strong affection had sprung up. Minnie scarcely ever left the side of the dying woman, and what little she could do to ease her last hours—it was but little, God knows!—she did tenderly and cheerfully. Minnie knew that Mrs. Pigeon was starving herself, so that her little girl might live. The beauty of that sacrifice Minnie was well able to comprehend. She would have done the same. But she was terribly unhappy. She knew by Joshua's manner, and by the few words that he spoke to her—kind one day, constrained the next—that her conduct had added to his unhappiness. She had seen him look at her with such a look of fear and wild amazement

in his eyes, as to convey to her the impression that she had done him a great wrong. But so blinded was she by her love, that she could not quite understand the meaning of this ; indeed, she did not pause to consider. The night before Mrs. Pigeon died, Minnie lay by her side, talking in whispers. But few words were spoken at a time ; Mrs. Pigeon was too weak. The mother lay with her child in her arms, and her husband sitting close to her, his hands clasping his knees, and with an expression of stony despair in his face. So he had sat for three or four days, answering his wife vacantly, and with the air of one whose mind was a blank. Little by little, Minnie had told Mrs. Pigeon her story ; and the dying woman, notwithstanding her own great trouble, had wept with Minnie, and sympathised with her. But Mrs. Pigeon, as well as expressing her sympathy, had striven to make Minnie aware of the fault she had committed.

‘ You see, my dear,’ she gasped in her weak voice, ‘ he has left a sweetheart at home, and he fears that if it were known that you were in the ship with him, she and his other friends might believe that he had played false with them.’

‘ I never thought of that before,’ sobbed Min-

nie. 'I only thought of one thing: I loved him, and I wanted to be near him. I didn't want him even to know; and those at home had no idea of what I was going to do—they can't even suspect.'

'But Mr. Marvel *fears* they may. Then think, my dear, was it not wrong to leave your father?'

'It was—I see it now; but I did not think of it then. But O, Mrs. Pigeon, if he would only forgive me! If I ask him, he will; but the answer would come out of the goodness of his heart, and while he forgave he would still condemn me. I know it, I know it, for he has never once called me by my name.'

Soon after that, Mrs. Pigeon fell into a doze; and waking when it was near midnight, whispered, 'Minnie!'

'Yes,' answered Minnie. She had been sleeping too, but so lightly that a whisper was sufficient to awake her.

'I have not long to live, my dear,' said Mrs. Pigeon; 'and I should like to pass my last minutes alone with my husband and child, and to speak to no one but them—to think of no one but them. But before I go, I should be glad to say good-bye to Joshua Marvel. Can you bring him to me? Say that I am dying.'

Repressing her sobs, Minnie crept to where Joshua was standing on the look-out. He had grown thin and gaunt like the others; his feet were bare, the only pair of shoes he had possessed having been rotted by the salt water; his clothes hung about him in tatters; and his face was covered with hair, which, having not yet grown to a decent length, added to the wretchedness of his appearance. The moon had gone down, and Joshua, shading his eyes with his hand, was looking out to sea, possessed with the fancy that he saw a sail many miles away. This had now become a very common illusion; scarcely a man on board who did not see imaginary sails and ships a dozen times a day. With a weary sigh Joshua dropped his hand.

‘It is folly,’ he muttered; ‘there’s no hope.’

Minnie timidly touched his sleeve, but did not succeed in attracting his attention. Then she called softly, ‘Joshua!’ And he gave a gasp, and turned and saw her; but there was not light enough for him to see the tears upon her face.

‘Mrs. Pigeon has sent me for you,’ said Minnie. ‘She is dying, and wants to wish you good-bye.’

He followed her in silence to where Mrs. Pigeon was lying.

‘Is it so bad?’ he asked gently, as he leant over her close enough to see her poor thin face.

‘Yes,’ she murmured. ‘Sit by me for a few minutes.’

He sat down, and took her wasted hand in his : it was like the hand of a skeleton, thin and cold—a hand already dead, though it closed on Joshua’s fingers.

‘Every one speaks well of you,’ said Mrs. Pigeon in broken tones : ‘I have heard the Captain speak many times of your courage and goodness and constancy.’

‘I have been glad to hear it, and am glad to hear it again,’ replied Joshua ; ‘it is my best reward as a sailor.’

‘You have a kind heart, I am sure,’ continued the dying woman. ‘If it were in your power to lessen the bitter grief that even a mere acquaintance might suffer, you would do so.’

‘I think I would.’

‘I am sure you would ; if only for the sake of those you love at home, and to whom you would wish that others might be kind when grief comes to them. You will forgive me for speaking thus ;

but I am dying, and I am a woman. I cannot say much more; I am too weak. If I could see you do one little thing, I should be glad.'

'I will do anything you ask.'

'Because a dying woman asks you; but do it from your own kind impulse as well. That is what I wish. You know who it is that is sitting by us now.'

'Yes,' he answered with a troubled glance at Minnie.

'She has been very good to me, very kind, very, very patient. And she is so young! Soon you and she may follow me. Think of that.'

'What is it you would have me to do?'

'I would have you be kind to this poor child; I would have you, at this awful time, show to her the love that a brother might show to a sister. She has committed a fault; forgive her for it; let her atone for it. Be not you the one to cast the stone at her. And when you speak to her, speak from your heart; for she can read and understand, as all loving women can, the music of the voice.'

'Minnie,' said Joshua, turning to her. Mrs. Pigeon had loosed his hand; and now he held out his two hands to Minnie. It was the first time he had called her by her name.

‘Joshua,’ she said, with deep sobs, her hands in his, and bowing her head upon his shoulder until her lips almost touched his face.

Was it treasonable to Ellen that he should permit it? Surely not, surely not, at such a time.

‘You have made me glad,’ said Mrs. Pigeon. ‘Now go. Good-bye. Heaven send you peace!’

‘And you!’ they both said.

Mrs. Pigeon nestled her face close to that of her little daughter, and soon afterwards died peacefully.

Then, for the first time, Mr. Pigeon seemed to awake to the reality of things. Kneeling by the side of his wife, he called softly, ‘Emma! Emma!’ And receiving no answer, shook her gently, and smoothed the hair from her white face.

‘Be comforted,’ said Joshua to him.

‘Comforted!’ he repeated with a pondering look, as if he were considering what meaning there was in the word. He kissed her passionately, and whispered something in her ear, and waited for the answer that could not come. ‘My God!’ he cried suddenly; ‘she is dead!’

Minnie placed little Emma before him, thinking that the sight of his little girl might lessen his grief; but he took no notice of the child, and

sat the whole day nursing the dead body of his wife in his lap. One tin of preserved meat was all that remained now of their stock of provisions. They brought his small share to him; but he motioned them away impatiently and fretfully. They went to him, and endeavoured to make him understand that, for the sake of the others, he should allow the remains of his wife to be placed in their poor shroud of sacking; but he met them savagely, and threatened to bite at them and strangle them if they did not let him alone.

‘For the sharks to eat,’ he whispered to the inanimate form; ‘they want to throw you into the sea for the sharks to eat, my darling. But I’ll tear their hearts out before they part us.’

When the silver crescent looked down again upon the despairing group, Joshua tried once more to comfort the man, and said, with a heavy heart, that perhaps at the last moment a ship might pick them up. But though he uttered the words, he did not believe in them.

‘And if it does,’ muttered Mr. Pigeon hoarsely, ‘what do I care now? You don’t know what it is to lose the woman you love.’ He staggered to his feet with the beloved form in his arms. ‘You want to take her from me; that is why you speak

the lying words. But nothing shall part us—nothing.'

Her face was lying upon his shoulder, and her fair hair was hanging loosely down over his breast. He took some of the hair in his mouth; and as Joshua saw him standing thus in the moon's light, he thought he had never seen a picture so utterly despairing. Thus the man stood, motionless, for a time, until the Captain's lady crept to his side, and tried to console him. Poor thing! she was terribly weak, and the words came from her lips slowly and wearily. He gazed at her vacantly while she spoke, then turned his eyes to his dead wife.

'Emma,' he said, 'don't fear; nothing that they say shall make me give you up. We will go together—we will go together.'

He cast one last look at the peaceful heavens, and whispering, 'Lord, receive us!' clasped his wife more closely to him, and jumped into the sea. Two or three heads turned at the splash; but no other notice was taken of the event. They were all too weak and despairing. The Captain's wife gasped, with heart-broken sobs,

'Poor dears! poor dears! Their troubles are over; they are happier than we are.'

‘Yes, my lady,’ said Joshua; ‘but I would not end my life like that. We are in the hands of the Lord; our lives belong to Him.’

He stretched himself at full length upon the raft, and took Ellen’s picture and the lock of hair from his breast, and kissed them again and again. They, and the Bible that Dan had given him, were his most precious possessions. When he looked up, Minnie and little Emma were close to him. He took the child’s hand; and they remained together during the long, long night.

A dreadful announcement was made the next day. The water that was served out was the last—one tablespoonful each exhausted the store; all the provisions were used up also. It seemed, indeed, as if the best thing they could do would be to die at once by their own hands. The rules made by the council were no longer thought of. Something to eat, something to drink: these were the only laws now. When the next man died, the sailors looked longingly at the body. The Lascar had his knife open, and was about to use it, when Captain Liddle called to him to stop.

‘Why?’ asked the Lascar, with a savage flourish of his knife.

‘Why?’ echoed the other men: there were only six of them left altogether.

‘Because fish is better to eat than human flesh,’ said the Captain.

‘So it is,’ said one; ‘but we haven’t any more fishing-line.’

‘Come, now,’ said the Captain, ‘even without that we can manage to catch a shark perhaps. Wait a few minutes. I’ll think of a way.’

And sure enough, very soon he devised a snare. First a running bowling-knot was made; then they cut a leg off the man that was dead (terrible to write, but true), and lashed it to the end of an oar; while on the end of another oar they hung the snare in such a way that the fish, to get at the bait, was compelled to come through it. There were plenty of sharks; and it was not long before one fell into the trap. It was dragged on to the raft; and a few blows from an axe soon killed it. After that, the man was sewn in sacking, and the funeral service was read over him, as it had been over all the others who had been buried in the sea.

During all this time it was evident that they were near the coast, and yet they never saw it. The Captain said that they were in the vicinity of the north-east coast of Australia—a part of the

continent which had been very little explored. Here came in Rough-and-Ready's experience. He knew something of the country, he said. It was inhabited by the most savage of the Australian natives, and no white man had as yet had the courage to penetrate far into the country.

'Yet we might make the coast,' said Rough-and-Ready, 'and not see a native for a long time, if we could manage to live; for I don't believe there are a great many of them. Cannibals they are; but, for all that, I should be glad to get among them. We might succeed in working our way down to a cattle-station.'

'Would there be really a chance of that?' asked one or two.

'About a hundred to one against us,' replied Rough-and-Ready carelessly; 'but that would be better than nothing.'

Rough-and-Ready gave them a description of some natives that he had seen, and told of their manner of living, their treachery and wildness. It was not very comforting to hear; the prospect of reaching land, and finding themselves in the midst of such savages, was very dismal.

The suffering that they had now to bear—that of thirst—was the most awful experience of all.

Some of them grew delirious, and saw gardens and pools of fresh water. 'My lady' was one of these. She whispered to her husband that a beautiful garden was within a few yards of them, and that they should reach it presently. She described the flowers and trees, and the cool fruit waiting to be plucked. And as the vision faded, she clutched him by the hand, and cried, 'John, John! What are they doing? We are going the wrong way. O, my God! we have passed it—it is gone!' and lay exhausted. The words came from her parched throat with difficulty; and Joshua shuddered as he touched her face: it seemed to be on fire. Soon, however, the gardens dotted with clear-water fountains, and with trees laden with refreshing fruit, grew again for the delirious woman. She saw them in the water, in the air, in the heavens—so bright, so deliciously cool, that her heart almost burst in the vain attempt she made to reach them with her hand. A little rain fell mercifully, and yet mockingly; for nearly everything on board was so impregnated with salt as to render the pieces of rags and canvas that were held out to catch heaven's tears no better when they were soaked than if they had been dipped into the sea. Rough-and-Ready took the

lining out of his wide-awake hat; and he and Joshua held it out until it was soaked with the blessed drops. The first use they made of the piece of wet rag was to moisten the women's lips with it, and then the little girl's and their own. Little Emma lived still; and Minnie had taken charge of her. As Joshua moistened Mrs. Liddle's lips, the Captain, who was lying beside her, motioned him.

'It is all over with me, Marvel,' he gasped; 'I haven't long to live. If by God's mercy you are rescued, report me at home, and say I did all in my power to save the ship.' Joshua pressed the dying Captain's hand. 'Mind, you are first in command now. In a few hours you will be captain. You have risen quickly,' he said with a faint smile. 'Beware of Scadbolt and that Lascar dog. When I am dead, take my boots—you have none—and what of my clothes may be useful to you; take the log-book too, and keep it safe. There is a record in it of Scadbolt's conduct, and your promotion. It will be necessary in case a ship picks you up. Scadbolt was your superior officer when we left the port of Sydney; and he might bring a charge against you which, without the log-book, you would not be able to refute.'

Joshua thanked the Captain for his thoughtfulness, and expressed a hope that it was not so bad with him as he feared. Then the Captain told Joshua how, a few days before, he had struck his head against a piece of iron, and how he had lost a quantity of blood. Joshua put his hand to the back of the Captain's head, round which a piece of canvas was tied, and felt a great gash there.

'I did not tell any one; but it so weakened me, that I thought I was about to die then. This is a piteous sight!' pointing to his wife. She lay, pale as death, with her eyes wide open, gazing at the gardens in the air. The tears rolled down Joshua's face. 'Bury us together,' continued the Captain. 'There are two or three pieces of iron you might put into the canvas with us, so that we may sink at once. You will do this?'

'Yes.'

Captain Liddle pressed Joshua's hand, and creeping close to his wife, clasped her in his arms. In the mean time Rough-and-Ready was busy squeezing drops of fresh water into a bottle. He saved nearly a pint.

Shortly after that, Joshua was the first to see

land. He went to tell the Captain, but could not arouse him ; his heart still beat, but very faintly. Night came on soon ; and when day dawned again the land was gone. Rough-and-Ready came to Joshua with a grave face. He said nothing ; but Joshua understood him. They went to where the lifeless bodies of the Captain and his wife lay, and sewed them in canvas, and placed inside the pieces of iron, as Joshua had promised. Joshua read the burial service as the bodies were thrown in the sea. They sank at once.

‘Not many of us left,’ observed Rough-and-Ready. ‘I should like to see land again. If we don’t sight it soon, we may find that the worst has not yet come. It is as Scadbolt said when the rules were being read, “Every man for himself now, and God for us all.” But come what may, we’ll stick to each other and to the women.’

‘It does my heart good to hear you speak so,’ said Joshua. ‘I know what you mean : the worst men are left against us ; but we are a match for them, I think. See, here’s the log-book, with the poor skipper’s last words : “I appoint Joshua Marvel captain of this raft, made out of the spars of the Merry Andrew, and intrust to him the

charge of the surviving passengers and crew.— John Liddle, Master of the Merry Andrew.”’

Rough-and-Ready touched his hat in sailor fashion.

‘While we are at sea, Captain,’ he said, ‘I will obey your orders.’

A thrill ran through Joshua as he heard himself called Captain. Captain! But of what a crew! The promotion had come all too soon.

Before long he had to exercise his authority. They were being driven on to a reef by a strong current. It was necessary to get the raft into deep water before dark. He gave his orders; and although both Scadbolt and the Lascar saw the wisdom of them, they refused to obey.

‘I am captain,’ said Scadbolt. ‘You will obey my orders now.’

Then Rough-and-Ready took a double-barrelled pistol from his belt, and gave its fellow to Joshua. They covered Scadbolt and the Lascar with them.

‘Obey orders!’ cried Rough-and-Ready in as loud a voice as he could command. ‘Obey orders! Speak another word of disobedience, and you are dead men!’

The rebellious men were cowed. With scowl-

ing faces they worked as Joshua directed; and with some trouble they got the raft clear over the reef, and floated it into deeper water. The night that followed was a night of great anxiety. Joshua knew that they were near land; and he and Rough-and-Ready kept watches of two hours' duration in turn. The reason of this was, that they did not deem it safe to sleep both at the same time; for they suspected that Scadbolt and the Lascar were only waiting for the opportunity to fall upon them and kill them.

'We have all the firearms, thank goodness,' said Rough-and-Ready, 'and all the powder and shot. We are masters while we can keep these.'

He had kept a sharp guard over the firearms, and had indeed secretly dropped three guns into the sea. 'Better there than in those rascals' hands,' he wisely thought; 'we mustn't cumber ourselves with too much lumber.'

In the night Joshua whispered to Rachel Homebush and Minnie that to-morrow probably would decide their fate. They revived somewhat at the news, and Minnie directed Joshua's attention to little Emma Pigeon.

'She has not spoken all day,' said Minnie anxiously.

Joshua placed his hand on the little girl's heart; it beat, but very faintly.

'She will live, Minnie,' said Joshua, 'if we can reach land; we are certain to find food then.'

While they spoke, Minnie kept Joshua's hand in hers; it was her only comfort, poor child. He was kneeling by her side, and she saw in his face that he had no harsh thoughts for her. They had not exchanged a word about their friends at home, but Minnie said to-night,

'Joshua, when you first came to our little room—do you remember?—what should we have thought if a wizard had told us this?'

'What, indeed!' replied Joshua; and then, after a pause, 'Do you suffer much, Minnie?'

'Not now. Ah, Joshua, if I can only live to repay you!'

'Keep up your courage, Minnie, and pray that we may reach friendly land—any land—to-morrow,' was his answer.

She did pray fervently, and when daylight came they saw land. It did not look very friendly. A long line of dark savage-looking rocks was what they saw; towering gloomily and threateningly for the most part, but with many a little inlet, which offered them a favourable chance of landing, as

Joshua's seaman's eye discerned. There were only eight living persons now on the raft out of the thirty-five who first took shelter there. Five men—to wit, Joshua, Rough-and-Ready, Scadbolt, the Lascar, and the sailmaker; two women—Rachel Homebush and Minnie, and the little girl Emma. The men worked and watched with a will. Private animosities were for the time forgotten; but, for all that, Rough-and-Ready was never off his guard. Everything looked fair, when suddenly up sprang a land breeze, and they were driven to sea again; the hope that had been kindled died away. They caught a cod, but the women turned from it with loathing. Then Joshua thought of a fine thing. The sun was high in the heavens. He took a piece of rag and washed it and dried it; then he took a magnifying glass out of a telescope, and caught the sun's fire on to the rag. He had wood ready, and they made a fire on the raft. The sailors ate their portion of the fish raw; but Joshua put his and the women's and Rough-and-Ready's on the wood, and roasted it. Before they gave this delicious food to the women, they moistened their lips with a little of the water that was still left in Rough-and-Ready's bottle; the moistening and the food were new life

to them all. Minnie chewed a little of the fish and placed it in the child's mouth; the child swallowed it, with difficulty at first, and seemed to grow stronger soon afterwards; she had been better nourished than the others. As if in reward for this good thought of Joshua's, the wind shifted to a sea breeze, and a couple of hours before midnight they were driven on to land. It required the greatest care and the most delicate handling to steer the raft safely through the rocks; but it was done. Scadbolt and the Lascar were about to scramble on to the rocks, when Rough-and-Ready, in a voice of thunder—he seemed suddenly to have recovered his full strength—commanded them to stand. Not his voice, but his pistol, enforced obedience.

‘Why?’ demanded Scadbolt.

‘Because you are treacherous dogs,’ roared Rough-and-Ready; ‘because you are not men, but savages; because I know how such scum are to be treated. Ah, scowl as you will! but I have shot better men than you down before to-night, and I’ll shoot *you* down if you dare to stir, as I would a brace of treacherous dingos or Blacks—they’re much the same. The women and child are to be saved first. Why, if we allowed you to

get ashore, you'd strike us from the rocks before we got a footing! I know you, you see, you skunks. Marvel, take the women and little girl ashore first, one by one. I'll keep guard here the while. Sailmaker, assist Mr. Marvel.'

By this last masterly stroke Rough-and-Ready enlisted the sailmaker on his side, for a time at least. For the sailmaker and Joshua were man to man, and Joshua had firearms. So, with difficulty, the women and child were conveyed on to the rocks in safety; then Rough-and-Ready bade Joshua take ashore what things would be useful from the raft. Among other things, Joshua took ashore two axes, all the nails he could find, and some iron pots. The women also had some things they were anxious to preserve—needles and thread, and suchlike. All this occupied nearly two hours, and was not accomplished without difficulty. Scadbolt and the Lascar stood sullenly by the while. Rough-and-Ready was in his element; he absolutely revelled in the task he had set himself. It was as good as meat and drink to him to watch those two rascals and beat them through their fears. When Joshua and the sailmaker had completed their task, Rough-and-Ready joined them on the rocks. After him Scadbolt

and the Lascar scrambled on to land, and began to look hungrily about them. It was a fine night; the moon was nearly at its full. The first thing Rough-and-Ready did was to cast a glance at the women lying helpless on the rocks; the next thing he did was to smoothe his moustache with his hand in a thoughtful manner; the next, to send a dark look at Scadbolt and the Lascar, who were prowling about on the rocks in search of shell-fish; the next, to lay his hand in a familiar manner upon the sailmaker's shoulder.

‘I say, mate,’ said Rough-and-Ready, ‘have you a wife at home?’

‘Two.’

Rough-and-Ready whistled loud and long, and followed up the whistle with a laugh.

‘It’s no joke,’ said the sailmaker.

‘One isn’t, much less two,’ replied Rough-and-Ready, with a wink; ‘but never mind them now.’

‘I’m content.’

‘You seem a good-hearted fellow, sailmaker, and as you have two wives, you must think a great deal of womankind.’

‘I love ’em’—looking at the two poor creatures lying near them.

‘I’m a bushman myself,’ said Rough-and-

Ready, with assumed carelessness; 'I'd as soon be where I am as in any part of the world. I am at home here. What do you say, mate? Shall we be friends?'

'Glad to be;' and the two men shook hands, Rough-and-Ready hugging himself for his successful diplomacy.

'You're a man after my own heart,' said Rough-and-Ready, really appreciating the crisp utterances of the sailmaker, who evidently was not a word-waster. 'Seems to me that the first thing we've got to do is to bring the women round; mustn't let them die, eh?'

'Certainly not.'

'There's a split in the camp,' continued Rough-and-Ready. 'Those two rascals prowling about in search of something to eat, would be glad of an opportunity to get rid of us; and then God help the women! At all events let us three stick together—you and me and Captain Marvel. Agreed?'

'Agreed.'

'Good. What I want to do is to get fresh water for us and the women; I know how to look for it. Will you keep guard over the women with Captain Marvel till I return?'

‘ Yes.’

Rough-and-Ready placed a loaded pistol in the sailmaker’s hand—he did it without hesitation—and that act completed the conquest. Joshua, standing by, had heard the conversation, and now shook hands with the sailmaker. Scadbolt and the Lascar had also seen the conference.

‘ They’ve bought him over,’ said the Lascar.

‘ Never mind,’ replied Scadbolt ; ‘ there will be plenty of opportunities.’

In less than an hour Rough-and-Ready returned. He had taken two bottles with him, and brought them back filled with bright clear fresh water. He had his wide-awake hat in his hand ; it evidently contained something good, he was so careful in carrying it. Joshua put his hand in, and started back with a cry ; he had grasped a nettle.

‘ Careful, careful,’ said Rough-and-Ready, laughing at Joshua’s grimaces ; ‘ don’t be too eager to take hold of things. A great deal of the wood-growth round about here is covered with thorns, and some of them are poisonous to the blood. This isn’t though ; ’tis an old friend.’

He took out of his hat two small branches with long spines upon them ; the branches

were covered with fruit resembling a small apple.

‘Good to eat?’ asked the sailmaker.

‘Shouldn’t have brought them otherwise,’ answered Rough-and-Ready, in unconscious imitation of the sailmaker’s manner of speaking.

The sailmaker took some of the fruit and ate it, and would have taken more, but that Rough-and-Ready’s hand restrained him.

‘That’s not the way for a man to eat who has been nearly starved for six weeks,’ he said, ‘unless he wants to kill himself right out. Here, make yourself useful; but take a little water to drink first.’

Rough-and-Ready measured a small quantity of water, and gave the sailmaker and Joshua to drink. He had thrown down a couple of pieces of wood when he said, ‘Make yourself useful,’ and the sailmaker, after drinking, asked him what the wood was for.

‘A good job for you two that you have me for your mate,’ said Rough-and-Ready good-humouredly; ‘you might stand a chance of starving else. The enemy’—with a nod of his head in the direction of Scadbolt and the Lascar—‘won’t be half as well off as we shall be. Just watch me.’ He

took his knife and cut from the wood two pieces, in one of which he made a kind of groove, which he placed upon the ground. ‘This is off the black fig-tree, and is the best wood there is for making fire. Now rub away into the groove, steadily, like this, and keep rubbing. It’s hard work ; but never mind ; it’s worth the labour.’

He disappeared again, leaving the sailmaker at work, and returned with an armful of dry sticks and leaves. Soon fire came into the wood, the sparks dropped on to the dry leaves, and a blaze was kindled, that brought astonishment into the eyes of Scadbolt and the Lascar. Before the fire was made, the indefatigable bushman had gone *down* the rocks this time, and had returned with a hat full of mussels. These he put on the fire to cook ; and then sat down and rubbed his hands in a high state of satisfaction. Joshua had not been idle ; he had attended to the women and child, and had given them a little water, which was like nectar to them. They were too weak to exert themselves ; so the men sat by them and ate supper, and gave them to eat, sparingly, under the direction of Rough-and-Ready, who was regarded by the others with unbounded admiration. The warmth of the fire was very comforting to them, for although

summer was coming, their long sojourn on the raft had chilled their blood.

‘Well now,’ said Rough-and-Ready, when supper was over, ‘I think we ought to be very grateful for our escape. It was touch-and-go with us. We sha’n’t be very strong for a few days; and that’s what we’ve got to do first: to get strong. Then we can look about us.’

‘Where are we?’ whispered Minnie.

‘As well as I can make out, my dear, we are somewhere on the north-east coast of the continent of Australia; where I don’t believe a white man ever trod foot before. That’s something, isn’t it? We’re the first bits of civilisation that these rocks have ever seen.’

‘Is there any chance of a ship seeing us?’

‘I doubt it; but for my part I don’t want a ship to see me; I’ve had enough of ships. I feel at home here, or I shall feel so in a little while. I don’t doubt but what we shall be able to get plenty to eat and drink, and that’s our first great need. Try and sleep for an hour now. Strength is what we want, remember.’

Rachel Homebush turned to him and held out her hand. She was grateful for being saved, but she did not speak. The three men arranged to

get a little rest also, watch and watch in turn. It was Rough-and-Ready's watch first. Before Joshua lay down, he went to see if Minnie was asleep. Her eyes were closed, but she was aware of his approach.

‘That is you, Joshua?’

‘Yes, Minnie. Do you think you can sleep?’

‘I don't know; I am strangely excited. I thank God that you are saved. Joshua,’ rising to a sitting posture and taking his hand, ‘you will not be unkind to me now that we are out of danger?’

‘Surely not, Minnie. What makes you ask?’

‘I was afraid, that was all.’

Here the little child murmured something. Minnie placed her ear to the girl's lips.

‘She asked who was talking to me, and I told her you,’ said Minnie, taking Little Emma upon her lap. ‘She wants you to kiss her.’

Joshua stooped and kissed the little girl, and she put her arms round his neck, and asked where papa had gone to. Joshua turned away, and pressing Minnie's hand, was soon afterwards in the land of dreams. So, during the night, they slept and watched, and in their troubled dreams felt the rocks moving and swaying beneath them.

Every now and then they started in terror, and clutched what was nearest to them, as if life was slipping away; they suffered over again the agonies of thirst, and moved their parched lips entreatingly. When it was Joshua's watch, he observed the sufferings of his sleeping companions; he guessed the cause, for he had suffered himself in like manner. With merciful thoughtfulness he moistened their lips with fresh water; the women smiled and grew more composed: perhaps at that moment they dreamed that an angel was bringing them life and health. Minnie's head was lying on her hand, and her face was exposed to the light. It was sun-burnt, but the gipsy stain was dying out of it. Her hair too was growing lighter and longer. Joshua looked up at the sky and round about him at the strange scene. Over his head the light of day was just breaking, but the dusky shadows still lay upon the waters. Behind him a faint light, heralding the sun, was quivering on distant wood and upland.

‘Dan made me promise,’ he said softly to himself, as the wonderful strangeness of his position came upon him, ‘when I was seeing strange sights in strange places, to think, “Dan is here with me, although I cannot see him.” *Is* Dan here with

me now? Is it possible that he can have the vaguest idea of me as I stand, heart-wrecked, in this wild country? I will try to believe so; I will try to believe that he and Ellen see me as I am, know me as I am, and pity me. I could die here now contentedly, if that were a conviction. Ellen, dear wife! Dan, dear friend! dear mother and father! stand fast to me, and believe that I never wavered in my love and my truth!

This was his theme that he thought of and mused upon, while all the others were asleep. The rocks were burnished with golden light before they awoke.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE ROCKS.

As the sailmaker was stretching himself, Rough-and-Ready, who was already stirring, said,

‘I say, mate, what name shall we call you by?’

‘Isn’t Sailmaker good enough?’ was the Irish answer.

‘It’s good enough; but it’s no name.’

‘Tom, for short, then.’

‘That’ll do, Tom; it’s like your talk, short, and to the point.’

From that time they talked of him as Tom the Sailmaker.

‘We’re going to look for something for breakfast, Marvel,’ said Rough-and-Ready. ‘Don’t wake the women—let them have their sleep out. And keep your eye on those two rascals yonder. If they come to close quarters, have no mercy. They’d have none on you. Come along, Tom.’

They returned some two hours afterwards, with smiling faces. The women gathered hope from their cheerful countenances. The Sailmaker was loaded with wood to replenish the fire, which had not been allowed to go out during the night.

‘We’re going to have a fine breakfast,’ said Rough-and-Ready, flourishing half-a-dozen plump pigeons. He chuckled as he exhibited them; but he had no time for trifling. There was more serious business to attend to—the cooking of the pigeons. With those and a few mussels they made a breakfast fit for kings and queens. The two malcontents in the distance had no fire and no pigeons; they made their breakfast off cold shell-fish, and looked with envious eyes at the cooking going on among the other party.

‘Ah, ah, my fine fellows!’ cried Rough-and-Ready, waving half a roasted pigeon in the air; ‘what d’ye think of mutineering now?’

They could not hear him, but they understood his taunting action.

Said Rough-and-Ready to the women, when breakfast was finished,

‘Can you handle a pistol? Could you pull the trigger of one straight in the face of man or beast, if danger threatened?’

They looked at him inquiringly.

‘ You might have to do it,’ continued Rough-and-Ready ; ‘ so you had better learn, and be prepared.’

‘ But why ?’ they asked.

‘ You see, my dears, there are two parties of us. Here we are, one party. Yonder are two rascals, another party. We are not the best of friends, we two parties. If they could get rid of us, they would. By fair means they can’t ; but they might try foul. Now I take it that we men have to look after you and protect you—and you may depend upon us for doing our best, my dears. We must see to everything—food, lodging, protection from storms and from savage Blacks. That may take us away from you sometimes, and those rascals might steal upon you unaware. Or another thing might happen : we might fall sick. Then who will protect you ? Or another thing——But, pssha ! there are a dozen other reasons why you should learn to use firearms.’

Without more ado he showed them how to load a pistol and fire it, and indeed was not content until they did it to his satisfaction. Minnie was the more expert of the two ; she soon learned. Then said Rough-and-Ready,

‘Now, we are going to take a walk. A mile, I daresay. We shall be followed, you’ll see; the enemy will want to know where we are going.’

Rough-and-Ready took Little Emma in his arms, the sailmaker assisted Rachel Homebush, and Joshua attended to Minnie. As Rough-and-Ready expected, Scadbolt and the Lascar followed them at a distance. Rough-and-Ready led the way over the rocks, on to sand, into forest. They were nearly an hour before they came to the end of their journey, for the women were very weak and could walk but slowly. Without any forewarning, Rough-and-Ready stopped.

‘Here is another thing I have to teach you. A native call.’

And to their astonishment, he put his hands to his mouth and emitted a shrill cry, that rang through the woods and seemed to linger there. The word he uttered was ‘Coo-ēē!’ and the sound was composed of two notes, the second an octave higher than the first. He made them all repeat the cry after him many times, and made them dwell on the notes as long as their breath lasted.

‘If we miss each other, and lose our way, that cry will be a signal. You have no idea how far it will travel, if you dwell long enough on the

notes. Now, you' (to the men) 'stop here for a little while. You' (to the women) 'follow me.'

They obeyed him unhesitatingly. He led the women over a rise in the woodland, where the trees were thickly grouped; and when they were on the declivity on the other side, they saw at the base of the rise a lovely creek of fresh water sparkling in the sun.

'You will not be disturbed for an hour,' he said, and darted away.

They divined the meaning of this delicate thoughtfulness, and with full confidence in him and his party they made their way to the creek, and bathed and combed their hair. (I vouch for the comb, but am not prepared to say where it came from, for the cunning of woman is beyond me.) The men looked at them with astonishment when they came back, sleek and trim. They appeared to have grown a dozen years younger. They blushed and smiled as the men gazed at them, and Little Emma lisped, 'It was so nice!' Even Rachel looked brighter and more womanly.

After them, the men went in turns and bathed, and by that time they were hungry enough for their dinner. Rough-and-Ready had already provided it, having shot a sufficient number of birds

for three or four meals. Nothing could satisfy them after dinner but to go to the rocks, and look seaward for the sight of a ship. Rough-and-Ready declared it was useless. 'Time thrown away,' he said. 'If we see a ship, we have no means of signalling it; and even if we had, 'tis a thousand to one that they would not see the signal.' But all-potent as his authority and advice were in every other matter, he could not prevail upon them to cast away the hope of being rescued by that means. Before night came they made their way back to the woods, and constructed some rough tents with branches of trees to sleep in. As they were collecting suitable timber, Rough-and-Ready, who never omitted an opportunity to instruct his companions in the resources of the country, called their attention to a group of curiously-twisted trees, which he said were apple-trees, although there was no fruit on them. On nearly every one of them, three or four feet from the ground, was a large knob, bulging out like a tumour.

'See how bountiful Nature is,' said Rough-and-Ready. 'You need seldom be in want of water or food, if you know the secrets of the bush.'

He dug his knife into one of the knobs, and fresh water ran out of the wood. They tasted it, and found it very sweet.

It was a beautiful night, and they sat talking for some time before they retired to rest. Their strength was recruited by the nourishing food they had eaten, and by the bath they had had. They had not seen the Lascar or Scadbolt since the morning, and they deemed it prudent to keep watch during the night. Now that the first excitement of being saved was over, their thoughts turned to their unfortunate companions who had found a grave in the cruel sea, and they shed pitiful tears over the memory of the dead.

Rough-and-Ready's experience of the Australian natives was largely drawn upon during the night. Although he said nothing of his past career, it was evident that he was well acquainted with everything appertaining to Australian bush-life. His descriptions of the natives were not comforting; he described them as treacherous, mean, and cruel. As to their chances of escape, he declared that there was no hope from the sea. Their best plan would be to try and work their way southward, but not for some time, until they were quite strong.

'We will camp here,' he said, 'for two or

three weeks at least, and try and learn something about the country.'

But he told Joshua, when they two were alone, that he only said that to console the women.

'We can manage to live here; but to get south we should have to cross country, where we should almost certainly be starved to death or butchered by the Blacks.'

The prospect was dismal indeed; they seemed to be cut off from the world.

Notwithstanding that the women shuddered and trembled as they listened to Rough-and-Ready's account of the natives, with whom they were almost certain to come in contact soon, the subject was too fascinating to be avoided. So, being compelled to talk about them, he spoke of many strange things concerning them. The conversation turning upon their superstitions, he told his hearers of the savage beliefs in water-spirits and land-spirits, who are all females, and walk about without heads; of the Oorundoo, who comes out of the water to drown bad wives; of the Balumbal, a gentle race of spirits who live upon the sweet leaves of flowers; of the Bunyip, a monster who lives in the large lakes, and who issues therefrom to seize women and children; of

Potoyan, a spirit of darkness, whose Whisper strikes terror; and of many other singular beliefs.

Said Rough-and-Ready, 'There is no surer way to frighten the Blacks than through their superstitious fears. Their "doctors" can work upon them as they please.'

Joshua had taken care of his accordion, and had preserved it almost uninjured. He played, and they all listened wonderingly to the soft notes of 'Home, sweet home,' floating through the woods. It was like a dream; they could scarcely believe they were awake. When he ceased playing, a melancholy cuckoo-note came from the distant woods.

''Tis the more-pork, a night-bird,' said Rough-and-Ready. 'I never heard it sing in the day.'

They retired to their beds of dry leaves soon after that, and dreamt of the strange things they had heard. But Joshua could not sleep. Some time before midnight—it might have been an hour—he rose and wandered away from the camp, through the solemn woods. He took no notice of the groups of majestic trees through which he walked—here masses of the silver-leaved iron-bark; there thick clusters of the gigantic palm, woven together, as it were, by luxuriant vines

trailing through their topmost branches. Strange effects of light and shade were produced by this natural network; but Joshua took no heed of them, nor of the other wonders of the woods by which he was encompassed. A sense of awful desolation was upon him; tremblingly he retraced his steps till he came to the camp, where he sank upon the ground exhausted by emotion. The full moon rose and shed its light upon him. He took from his breast the Bible which Dan had given him, and read upon its first page, 'From Dan, with undying love and confidence.' Those words did much to calm him; he kissed them, and pressed the book to his heart, and gradually fell into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER V.

BITTER REVELATIONS.

HERE in the grand Australian woods are two tents—gunyahs Rough-and-Ready calls them—built of tea-tree bark, bound round by vine creepers. They are in the form of a hive, and are wonderfully picturesque and comfortable. Up to this time, the castaway dwellers in these gunyahs have been undisturbed by savages, and this has been a matter of surprise to all but Rough-and-Ready. ‘Wait till after the rainy season,’ he has said a dozen times; ‘we shall have plenty of them then.’ Rough-and-Ready has made this ‘rainy season’ a pretext for lingering near the spot where they first camped after their rescue. It would be suicide, he told them, to attempt to move at present; they would not be able to make their way through the country. But indeed all of them, with the exception of Joshua, were content to remain where

they were ; they dreaded to encounter the horrors of the wild country through which they would have to pass. Joshua was the only one who fretted at their life of inaction. It seemed to him the cruellest thing to remain passive while Ellen and Dan and his parents were waiting for him at home. But what could he do ? Without the assistance of Rough-and-Ready he was powerless ; and that wise man of the woods declared emphatically that it would be madness to start upon such an expedition. So Joshua was compelled to wait for events to shape his destiny, and fretted and worried because he could take no hand in the direction of them. It was a good thing for him that he had plenty to do ; he might else have lost his reason. Rough-and-Ready was the best of physicians ; he would not allow any of his companions to be idle, and he took care to supply them with more work than they could conveniently accomplish. He derived a huge pleasure from this cunning proceeding, and had many a sly laugh to himself because of it. The building of the gunyahs was a matter in which he took especial delight, and he and his mates laboured at them for many days ; when they were finished, Rough-and-Ready declared that they were better than the finest stone houses that ever

were built. The women took delight in them also, and decorated them with the prettiest creepers they could find. During all this time they were not molested by Scadbolt and the Lascar. In their rambles through the woods they occasionally came upon traces of the two rascals and caught distant glimpses of them, but they never came to close quarters. Once Scadbolt had attempted to make overtures; but he was warned off with small ceremony by Rough-and-Ready, who declined to parley with him.

On a certain moonlight light, not many nights ago, Rough-and-Ready invited Joshua to accompany him on an expedition. Coming to a place where the moon was shining over the tops of the gum-trees, Rough-and-Ready motioned Joshua to be still, and in a few minutes they heard a call, half scream, half chatter. Presently Rough-and-Ready raised his gun, pulled the trigger, and down came two animals shaped like cats, with long brushy tails, sharp claws, and something like thumbs on their hind feet.

‘ ‘Possums,’ said Rough-and-Ready in explanation.

He had found out a haunt of these animals, and that night they brought back more than a

dozen, some ring-tailed, some silver. They could only be shot on moonlight nights, said Rough-and-Ready, and are chiefly found where the gum- or peppermint-tree abounds. They had a splendid harvest, and in a week they collected nearly a hundred. Rough-and-Ready was mighty particular about the skinning of them, and about rubbing the fleshy parts of the skins with fine wood-ashes before fixing them on the trees to dry. They also caught a score or so of the sugar-squirrel, whose fur is real chinchilla. Upon these skins Minnie and Rachel are busy now with needle and thread, making caps for the men. It is a strange sight to see such evidences of civilisation in the wild woods. The women had begged Rough-and-Ready to spare the lives of two young opossums which were found alive in their mothers' pouches, and he, knowing that they could be easily tamed, had readily consented. They were the most docile and harmless little things, and soon became domesticated, if such a word may properly be used in the life I am describing. At the present time, one of them is hanging head downwards, with its tail curled round the branch of a tree, in a state of serene happiness and content. The other is with Little Emma, who is sitting not far from

the women, playing with it in the midst of a great heap of wild flowers she has collected.

The females are not alone. Two of the men are away, but Joshua is in sight, busy with his axe, cutting up a tree for slabs. To tell truth, Rough-and-Ready is not desirous of moving from the woods where they are now camped, unless they are compelled to do so by the savages or by unforeseen circumstances. They are camped upon high land, where they are comparatively safe from floods; the country round about is fairly stocked with game; and there is water in abundance — somewhat of a rare circumstance, and, rarer still, the water is sweet. As for the life itself, none could be more attractive to him. The slabs that Joshua is cutting now are designed for a fence round their homestead. ‘Even if Blacks come,’ thought Rough-and-Ready, ‘and they are not inclined to be friendly, we may frighten them away with our guns.’ He is very sparing of their powder and shot, of which they have not too large a store, and has taught his companions to make and lay many kinds of cunning snares for game. He is a thorough bushman, and in his present circumstances is certainly the right man in the right place.

The character of Rachel Homebush appears to have completely changed. The trials she has gone through have softened her hitherto hard nature. No stony-voiced exhortations to repent drop from her lips ; she is humanised and humbled. But a short time since she was intolerant, arrogant, harsh, and proudly-insolent in her armour of sanctity ; but now she has doffed that armour, and has inward doubts of herself. She believes in the goodness of others. She is less sanctified and more godly.

Said Rough-and-Ready to Joshua, when they were talking of the women,

‘ Rachel Homebush is a different creature to what she was. She is not so good as she was, and I think she’s all the better for it.’

Joshua smiled at this paradox, and said,

‘ At all events she has a different opinion of you.’

‘ Think so, mate ?’ asked Rough-and-Ready, a little anxiously. ‘ I’m sorry for it, in one way. There’s only one woman——’

But he paused unaccountably in the middle of his speech, looked at Minnie, who was a few yards away, looked at Joshua, and walked off whistling.

Here is the picture. Two hives, bright with

flowering creepers ; Rachel and Minnie sitting in the shadow of the hives, on stumps of trees, making fur caps ; a 'possum hanging by its tail, studying gravitation ; the little child, not far away, lying on the ground, surrounded by wild flowers, playing with her pet ; in the distance, Joshua busy with his axe ; surrounding and encompassing all, bright sky and lovely forest. Rachel, raising her eyes from her work, looks at the child in the midst of her garden, and a soft expression rests upon her face. The child sees the look, and thrusting the 'possum in the bosom of her frock, runs towards Rachel with a handful of flowers. Rachel kisses the child, strokes the silky coat of the 'possum, and selecting a piece of wild jasmine, places it in her breast. Then Little Emma goes to the back of Minnie, and twines some of the brightest flowers in Minnie's beautiful hair ; and after falling back and admiring the effect of her handiwork, whispers to Minnie to get up, for she wants to show her something. Minnie smiles and rises, and they walk hand in hand to where Emma's wild flowers are, but the child leads her farther on, in the direction of Joshua. Made aware of the child's intention, Minnie falters, and tries to release her hand gently ; but Little Emma clings to her, and

laughingly strives to pull her along. Joshua's attention is attracted to the gentle struggle, and, coming forward, he asks the meaning of it. The child explains that she wanted Joshua to see how pretty the flowers looked in Minnie's hair, and that Minnie tried to run away. Joshua looks at Minnie, who stands trembling before him, as if she were guilty of some deep offence. Her bosom is heaving, her eyes are luminous with tears, her face is bright with blushes, and the tell-tale blood dyes her fair neck. Surely he has never looked upon a more beautiful picture! He says some kind words to her, and she goes back to her place near Rachel, and he to his work. But, within a few minutes afterwards, he swings his axe over his shoulder, and walks away in deep thought. The bees are humming about him, many-coloured locusts and golden-green grasshoppers flit among the tangled brushwood, gorgeous butterflies skim through the air; the gaudy beetle creeps lazily along; the praying mantis, with its leave-like wings, darts before him; the tree-frog utters its strange cry; a great lizard, with a frill round its neck, disappears at the sound of his step. He walks past these and myriad other wonders of the woods, until the character of the country changes, and he finds himself

among rocky gullies, with many a fissure in the stony ranges that lead down to them. The buzz of woodland life has ceased ; unfathomable silence seems to dwell in these rocky hills and valleys. But suddenly a sharp shrill note sounds upon the air. It is a bird's note, but no mate's voice replies. It is like himself, solitary in the midst of this ungracious scene, which frowningly proclaims, ' Love finds here no dwelling-place.' Again the note sounds, and as he makes his way towards it, curious to see what kind of bird haunts so desolate a place, he hears a faint echo answer—a voice with no soul in it, he thinks in his then melancholy mood. He comes to the opening of a small cave, the walls of which assume fantastic shapes in the dim light. And there, uttering its wail, to which only mocking echoes make response, he sees the Solitary Warbler standing alone in the centre of the cave, like the Cain of its race. He sighs, and walks on—over the rocky range, into woodland again, where the ground dips, and where the rich soil is teeming with new wonders ; and coming to a great pool, he sits down by its side. He has been to this spot before. Chancing upon it by accident in one of his rambles, he was attracted by its beauty, and by the singular effect of the

shifting shadows upon the bosom of the pool, whose surface is almost covered by lovely pink and white water-lilies. He looks now into the water, and sees his haggard face reflected between the beautifully - coloured lilies. And singularly enough he sees at the same time, with the eyes of his mind, the picture of Minnie as she stood before him, with eyes downcast and the flowers in her hair. It is because he was disturbed by thought of her that he left his work. He knows her secret but too well. She loves him with all her soul. She tells it in every look, in every word; every little act of hers towards him is imbued with dangerous tenderness, and yet she is unconscious of wrong. Every day she grows more devoted—every day grows more beautiful. And it is a part of his great misery to feel that her society gives him pleasure as well as pain. He is storm-tossed by a conflict of feeling. In this conflict no miserable vanity finds place, although it might be well excused in most men in such a position; nor is he by a thought false to Ellen. But Minnie is dependent upon him, lives upon his kindness, asks nothing from him but gentle speech. Shall he deny her this? Shall he be false to his nature, and be harsh where harshness would be brutality?

He is strong; she is weak. Her power is in her weakness; his weakness is in his strength. She leans upon him for support, and rules by submission.

Something stirs behind him. A sound so light that it might have been produced by the fall of a leaf or by the swaying of a bough from which a bird has flown. Joshua, whose senses have been quickened by his late experience, turns rapidly, and meets the Lascar face to face. In the woods thought and action are twin-like. Quick as lightning Joshua's pistol is in his hand, and the muzzle is pointed straight at the Lascar's breast.

'Stand!' cries Joshua, 'if you value your life.'

The Lascar stands motionless, his hands behind him.

'Show your hands and what is in them, or I fire.'

The Lascar shows his hands—a large piece of rock in one. He had seen Joshua sitting by the pool, and had intended to brain him with the stone. At Joshua's command, he drops the stone. A bitter smile wreathes Joshua's lips, and something like a savage instinct whispers to him to shoot his enemy dead upon the spot. But the

thought that it would be nothing less than murder restrains him. The Lascar sees the struggle in Joshua's face, and trembles; miserable wretch as he is, he has not conquered the fear of death. He is reassured when Joshua drops his hand and moves away, still facing him. At this, fear being subdued, the venom in his nature begins to work. Shall he let his enemy depart without a sting? He commences with a piece of bravado.

'Ah,' he exclaims, 'you have robbed me, but you can't make up your mind to murder me.'

'Robbed you!' exclaims Joshua, forgetting for a moment. 'Of what?'

'Of my knife. Give it me back. I can't hurt you with it. You are more than a match for me with your pistols. How do you think I can live without a knife?'

Joshua makes no reply to this appeal to his humanity, and moves off a few steps, warily.

'I suppose you think yourself a manly sort of fellow,' continues the Lascar, moving step for step with Joshua, but keeping at a safe distance nevertheless, 'robbing people of their knives, threatening to murder them, and running away with an innocent girl, and ruining her!'

'You villain!' exclaims Joshua, quivering at

this reference to Minnie, 'do not make me forget myself!'

'So far as to shoot a man in cold blood!' sneers the Lascar. 'But don't forget that the first time you struck me it was for running after a woman. What better are you than me? I ran after a woman, not an innocent girl. Perhaps you'll say you didn't trick her from her father's house, and make love to another girl, her friend, all the while, and that girl the sister of the man you pretended such fondness for! Going to be married to her too, I heard. But I can tell you something you don't know. You were precious sly with your sweetheart, Ellen Taylor, in Gravesend; she wouldn't suspect you, I daresay you thought, if you had her down at Gravesend until the ship sailed — she wouldn't have an idea then that your other sweetheart, Minnie Kindred, with her face stained brown, was waiting for you on board the Merry Andrew. Ah, you played a cunning game, you pink of perfection, you sailor-hero; but I outwitted you, I think, in a way you're not aware of.'

'How?' asks Joshua, constrained to listen.

'How? I watched you, and was paid for it. You little thought that, did you? I'll tell you something more. The man who paid me for

watching had a fancy for your sweetheart Ellen : you've no need to ask me who he is, for you'll not find out through me. I did my duty to him, and he paid me for it. Why, directly I set eyes on that brown-faced gipsy-maid aboard the Merry Andrew, I says, "Minnie Kindred, by God!" and I set a trap for her, and she fell into it. Then what did I do? I sent a letter to my master by the pilot, and told him to go to Minnie Kindred's father, and to Dan, and to your mother and father, and to your other sweetheart, Ellen, and let them know that you had run away with the girl, and that you parted from Ellen Taylor one minute, and was courting Minnie Kindred aboard ship the next. Was that a good game to play? Was I as cunning as you? Was that paying you for what you first did to me? Do you remember what I said, when you called me a dog of a Lascar? I told you that the Lascar dog never forgets—never, never! Why, now I look into your face, I could hug myself to think that we're wrecked, and that we shall die and rot here, every one of us, and that your sweetheart (who's my master's sweetheart now, I'll be sworn) and your friends know you for what you are—a mean false hound! I put a cross against you once, and I swore to

have your heart's blood. Have I had as good? Think of it, and tell me if I have had my revenge.'

But he does not wait to be told. There is so dangerous a look in Joshua's face, that he darts away and disappears in the bush. It is well for him that he has escaped, for Joshua is maddened by what he has heard. Truly the Lascar has struck at him with a cunning hand. The agony of his soul is shown in the convulsive twitching of his features, in his white lips, and in the veins of his strong hand, which swell almost to bursting as he grasps a stout branch for support. So he remains fighting with his agony with a bleeding heart, for full half an hour. This knowledge that he has gained is more bitter than all the rest. He knows the worst now. The evidence against him is awful in its completeness. 'Even the Old Sailor will believe me guilty,' he thinks, and groans aloud at the thought. But there is one duty before him to do. He must tell Minnie. This last resolve comes upon him when the force of his first passion is somewhat spent. Between him and Minnie no word has ever passed of those at home; their very names have been avoided. But Joshua now makes up his mind that silence on this sub-

ject must be broken. It *must*; both for Minnie's sake and his own.

It is past sundown. The day has been very hot, and the shadows of night bring cooler breezes, grateful to the senses of the castaways. Joshua has drawn Minnie a little apart from the others; she, yielding to his slightest wish, accompanies him to a part of the forest where they can talk unobserved. His first impulse is to ask her why she came on board the *Merry Andrew* unknown to him, and why she had disguised herself from him; but he spares her this pain, and takes from his breast Ellen's portrait and her lock of hair, and Dan's Bible. He hands Minnie the Bible.

'Do you know what this is?' he asks.

'Yes,' she answers; 'it is the Bible that Dan gave you.'

'Read what is on the first page.'

She reads the inscription: 'From Dan to his dearest friend and brother, Joshua. With undying love and confidence.'

'You know the love that existed between Dan and me, Minnie?'

'I know. It is perfect. Why do you say existed? Surely it exists!'

'I don't know; I'm afraid to think. Your

words are in some sort comforting to me ; for they prove you have acted in ignorance, and that you have not wilfully wronged me.'

She looks at him imploringly.

'You will understand presently,' he says.

He takes Ellen's lock of hair, and presses it to his lips, and kisses Ellen's portrait also. The hot blood flushes into Minnie's face, then suddenly deserts it, and she clasps her hands convulsively. She is but woman, after all. Yet she controls her agitation sufficiently to ask in an unsteady voice,

'Is it necessary to speak farther of this, Joshua?'

'It is more than necessary,' he replies ; 'it is imperative. My duty and my honour demand it.'

She bows her head ; he pauses awhile, and when he speaks again, it is in a softer tone.

'Minnie, do you know that Dan loved you?'

'Loved me!'

'Ay, with all the strength of his constant heart.'

'I did not know it. I thought he liked me, but I had no idea it was as you say.'

'He told me in confidence some time before I left. My heart bleeds as I recall that conver-

sation. No girl could hope to be more fondly, more faithfully loved. When the Merry Andrew left Gravesend, I said to myself, "When I return, Minnie will be Dan's wife;" for I could not but believe that you would have learned to appreciate the worth of such a love as his. But it was not to be.'

'No, it was not to be,' says Minnie sadly. 'If I had known, it could not have been; if I had remained at home, it could not have been. You, who knew Dan so well, do you not know something of me also? I understand the motive that impels you to speak to me of these things, and I honour you the more for it. It is another proof of your goodness and generosity——'

'Minnie, Minnie!' he cries, 'do not speak to me like that!'

'I must; I cannot help myself. Have you so poor an opinion of me—do you know so little of me—as to think I would marry a man I did not love? Rather than that, I would choose, for him I loved, the bitterest lot that life can offer—misery, shame, humiliation—and be content. Dan is all that you say; but I did not love him, did not deceive him. If he told you so, he told you what is false.'

‘He did not tell me so, but said that, from your manner to him sometimes, he hoped to win your love.’

‘Must I shame myself to justify myself?’ she cries recklessly. ‘I was happy in his company because he was your friend, and because he loved you. I was happy in his company because he spoke of you, and because——Joshua, have pity on me, and forgive me! O my heart, my heart!’

He catches her fainting form, for she is falling. Weeping, she turns her face from him, and hides it in her hair. Soft breezes play among the branches of the trees, stirring them into worshipping motion, and the morepork with its sad-coloured plumage flits by on noiseless wings, uttering its melancholy note. Joshua waits until Minnie is more composed; presently her sobs grow fainter, and she leaves the shelter of his arm, and stands a little apart from him, with her face still averted.

‘I do pity you,’ he then says, ‘and forgive you. What I have said and what I have done spring from no feeling of unkindness to you, Minnie. God knows, in such a strait as ours, such a feeling would be worse than cruel. But there are certain things, of which I am afraid you

are ignorant, that I must speak of, and that you must hear. Do you know that, before I left home, I was suspected of playing with your feelings—of making love to you clandestinely, and so betraying the friend whom I would have laid down my life to serve ?’

‘ No, no, Joshua, do not tell me that !’

‘ It is the truth ; but I did not know it until after I had bidden good-bye to mother and father and Dan in Stepney. Where were you on that day ?’

‘ I—I was not at home,’ she falters.

‘ You had left, then. I went to your father’s room to wish you and him good-bye. He refused to see me. I asked to see you, and Susan told me you were asleep. I was deeply grieved ; and I can understand now what caused Susan to beg me imploringly to be true to Ellen. What a cowardly villain they must believe me to be ! Your father suspected me ; Susan suspected me. If I had died that Christmas night at mother’s door, it would have been happier for me ! Minnie, I thanked you once for saving my life ; but I cannot thank you now, for you have made me the unhappiest of men.’

She does not answer him, but stands before him trembling and suffering, as before a judge,

enduring her punishment, and admitting the justice of it.

‘It is part of my unhappiness,’ he continues, ‘that I have to speak thus to you ; it is part of my unhappiness that I have to show you the consequences of your rash conduct. Listen : to-day I saw the Lascar ; he came behind me stealthily, to kill me, I believe ; but I turned and saw him in time. I could have shot him dead where he stood ; indeed, some savage prompting urged me to do so, but I held my hand and was spared the crime. This man hates me, Minnie. In an encounter I had with him before I first went to sea, I struck him and hurt him. He has had a bitter revenge upon me. He saw you on board the *Merry Andrew* before the pilot left the ship, and recognised you, despite your disguise.’

Minnie holds her breath. She remembers how the Lascar whispered her name in her ear the first day she went aboard.

‘He did a devilish thing then. He wrote a letter home, saying that I had run away with you, and that we were together on board the *Merry Andrew*.’

She falls on her knees before him, and raises her hands supplicatingly, and begs him again to

forgive her, and to believe that she knew nothing of this, and that if she had known——

‘If you had known, Minnie,’ he says, gently raising her, ‘you would not have done what you have. But you did not stop to consider, poor child! You see the consequences of that letter, do you not? Suspecting me, your father told me the story of his life, to warn me not to betray you. Suspecting me, Susan implored me to be true to Ellen. Dan confided to me his love for you, and I listened to and sympathised with him. Well, what must he and all of them think, when they have learned that you and I are together on board the *Merry Andrew*? And I have something to tell you more painful than all the rest.’

He puts Ellen’s portrait into her hand.

‘Do you know who this is?’

Her eyes are blurred by tears, and she sees Ellen’s sweet face through the sorrowful mist.

‘It is Ellen’s,’ she says.

‘It is my wife!’

As Joshua utters these words, earth and heaven fade in Minnie’s sight; nothing is visible, nothing is palpable to her senses, but the knowledge that flashes upon her, that her love, instead of being her glory, is now her shame. ‘There is

no earthly sacrifice that love will not sanctify,' her father had said. Could love sanctify such a sacrifice as she had made—a sacrifice that had brought disgrace and dishonour upon the man she loved? For the first time some slight consciousness of her error breaks upon her, and she looks on herself as a shameful thing. As Joshua, witnessing her agony, moves a step nearer to her, she cries, 'No, no, do not touch me!' and with a wild shudder sinks upon the ground. He, animated by sincerest compassion, throws himself by her side, lays his hand upon her head, and raises her face to his. She bows her head upon his shoulder, and sobs her grief out there. By every means in his power—by gentle speech, by tender act—he strives to soothe her, and succeeds. And then, true to his purpose, he finishes his story—tells her what occurred between him and the Old Sailor at Gravesend; how surprised he was to find that that good old man, and even his own mother, had seen Minnie's fancy for him, and had devised the cure for it; and how, prompted by duty and by his love for Ellen (he dwelt much on that), he had married her quietly at Gravesend, and had spent there the three happiest days of his life. And when his story is finished, and she

has learnt all, they sit hand in hand, very quiet and sore-smitten, until Minnie, in a singularly subdued voice, asks what she shall do : as if, having committed this fault, and brought such terrible suspicion upon him, he has only to tell how to atone for it, and she will straightway do it. Sadly he replies, 'What *can* you do, Minnie? Nothing—nothing but wait. There is, to my mind, not the barest chance of escape. We shall make our graves in this wild forest; but we must live so—you and I, my dear—that upon my death-bed I shall be able to think that I have been true to my wife, true to my friend. Life is not the end of all things.'

Meekly she assents. He calls her 'Sister,' and kisses her; and then they rejoin their companions, who are seated by the gunyahs, cooking turtles' eggs found by Rough-and-Ready the discoverer.

CHAPTER VI.

SURPRISED BY SAVAGES.

THE wisdom of Rough-and-Ready's plan of action was soon proved. One night, thunder awoke them from sleep. The thunder that breaks over the housetops, and the lightning that flashes in at the window-panes of a populous city, are very different from what are heard and seen in mountain ranges and great wastes of forests. Nature seems to be toned down in the city; in the forests and mountains she is grandly beautiful in repose, terrifically beautiful in travail. The thunder-peals were so loud and awful, that the women and child lay clasping each other in speechless fear. Like savage Titans the sound swept down upon them, and rushed through the forests and over the mountains and into them in search of echoes. The lightning darted upon the trees, and ran along the branches, and leapt through the woods

into the bowels of the earth. Everything that lived in stream and woodland, in rocky range and dark lagoon, sought shelter from the storm, of which Sound was but the herald. Presently it came, the swift rush of waters, like a second deluge, filling the creeks and rivers, and flooding all the land. Great torrents rushed down the mountain-side into the low land, sweeping all before them. The storm raged the whole night through, abating slightly when morning dawned. It was well for the castaways that they had a little food stored by, for they could not go out in search of any. The second night the women begged the men to stay with them; so they all occupied the women's gunyah, lying side by side in the dark, and whispering to each other little words of comfort. All but Rachel Homebush, who was struck dumb by fear. The second night's storm was more terrific than the first, and about midnight so tremendous a peal of thunder broke over them, that they started up in dread.

‘Who screamed?’ asked Rough-and-Ready. But his voice was not heard; and swift upon the heels of the thunder another vivid lightning-flash, instantly followed by a terrific burst of thunder, darted through the gunyah, and struck them blind

for many moments. Then, during a slight lull, Rough-and-Ready asked again,

‘Who screamed?’

‘Not I,’ said Joshua.

‘Nor I,’ said the Sailmaker.

The women did not speak. Joshua’s heart beat with a new fear as he whispered,

‘Minnie! Minnie! speak to me. You are not hurt?’

And tears of thankfulness came into his eyes as Minnie answered in a trembling voice,

‘No, Joshua; I am only frightened. Let me hold your hand.’

‘Where’s the child?’ he asked.

‘Rachel has her. Rachel! Rachel!’

No voice replied. Thoroughly alarmed, they called to her again and again, and to the child, but could not rouse them. They were in the deepest darkness.

Presently Rough-and-Ready said, ‘Hush! we must wait for the light.’

They waited for the light, and by the first faint glimmer they saw Rachel and the child lying down peacefully, the woman with the child folded in her arms. Light had come to them before the others!

Rough-and-Ready, who was the first to discover it, turned to his companions, with the tears streaming down his face and beard.

‘Comfort *her*,’ he said to Joshua, pointing to Minnie.

Joshua put his arm round Minnie, and turned her face from where the woman and child lay.

‘Poor Rachel! Poor Little Emma!’ he said. ‘Be brave, Minnie, my dear. Do not give way, for my sake.’

He knew what words to utter to give her strength to bear the shock, and he made use of his power with a wise compassion.

Her poor white lips trembled as she said to him,

‘Pray for one thing for me, Joshua. Pray that I may not die before I have made atonement.’

‘Hush, hush, my dear!’ he replied; ‘there is none to make. It is I who rather should have to make it, for my hardness to you. Be comforted, my dear.’

The words came from his heart. He would have been unfeeling indeed if he had not learned to appreciate the beautiful unselfishness of Minnie’s love; her meekness, her faithfulness, her

devotion, her un murmuring submission, could not fail to have a powerful effect upon such a nature as his.

The men went into their gunyah, and before night came again had made a rough coffin of bark. The next morning they dug a grave, and stood round it bareheaded, while the rain was falling. They kissed the child's face and poor Rachel's also before the cover was put on the rude coffin. Amid deep sobs—the men were not ashamed of their tears—Joshua read prayers; some vine-creepers were thrown into the grave; the earth was piled up into a mound; and they went back sadly to their tent. The loss of some one very near and dear to them could not have been more severely felt. From that time forth it became a practice for Joshua to read a chapter out of the Bible every morning and evening.

The rainy season lasted for three weeks, and during this time they lived very miserably. Minnie thrived, however—perhaps because Joshua was tender to her. The hot weather came, and they were able to go in search of food. But Minnie was never left alone. Joshua and she were waiting one evening for the return of Rough-and-Ready and the Sailmaker, but Rough-and-

Ready came back without his companion. He looked round in some anxiety.

‘Hasn’t the Sailmaker returned?’

‘No,’ said Joshua; ‘you went out together.’

‘I know; but I missed him a couple of hours ago, and although I have searched for him and cooëd for him everywhere, I haven’t been able to find him.’

The Sailmaker did not make his appearance. To the surprise of his companions, Rough-and-Ready, after dark, fired half-a-dozen shots from his pistol into the air.

‘You look surprised,’ he said; ‘well, now’ (to Minnie), ‘can you bear a shock? Will you promise to be brave if I tell you something?’

She nodded.

‘It is only something that I have been expecting. I think that the Sailmaker is with the natives.’

‘Why do you think so?’ asked Joshua.

‘For good reasons. I saw some tracks of them when I was hunting for Tom. Perhaps they have captured him.’

‘He had his pistols.’

‘Frightened to use them, perhaps; or perhaps there were a lot of the Blacks, and he thought it

would be foolish and useless. Besides, he is new to them. He's all right, though; they won't hurt him, for he's a plucky fellow. Now, mind. When you first see the natives, and indeed always after that, show no fear of them. What I am going to say is to my mind a most foolish thing; but there's the faintest chance in the world that, making friends with them, you might make your way down south, from one tribe to another, in a few months, and come upon some cattle station. But, lord! there's one chance for you, and a hundred against you.'

'Why do you say "you"?' asked Minnie. '“We” rather.'

'No, my dear,' said Rough-and-Ready with a blush. 'I have two reasons for saying you and not we. The first reason is not a reason—it is a presentiment. I shall die in the bush. The second reason is a plainer one. It wouldn't be pleasant for me to get into civilised company in New South Wales.'

'Why?'

Rough-and-Ready looked at her with admiration, and said, very inappropriately as she thought,

'Do you know that you have made me a better man?'

‘A better man!’ she exclaimed. ‘Why, you are a good man, and a brave man too.’

‘You think so. So let it be,’ he said, half seriously, half gaily. ‘I’m not going to spoil your delusion just yet.’

They saw no signs of the savages that night. They did not retire until late, and Rough-and-Ready went many times short distances in different directions to look for the natives, but they did not appear. Joshua took out his accordion and played. Rough-and-Ready listened thoughtfully, and when Joshua had finished an air, he said,

‘I told you, when we first came ashore here, that there is no surer way to frighten the Blacks than through their superstitious fears. Your playing to-night, connected with the near presence of the savages, brings that remark back to me; and I’ll tell you why. That music of yours may possibly be a great power with them. They have never heard anything like it. If you don’t lose your self-possession when you get among them—and you must take care not to, for Minnie’s sake; her life may depend upon your courage—you may obtain an influence over them by means of your accordion. Sound for which they cannot ac-

count has a wonderful effect upon them. Here you have it. Don't forget what I say. Come, now, I can hear no sign of the black devils. You take some rest. I'll wake you in a couple of hours.'

So they watched in turns during the night.

'What is the best thing to do,' asked Joshua the following evening, 'when the savages come?—to make friends with them, or try to frighten them?'

'There are too few of us to fight,' answered Rough-and-Ready. 'We might frighten them for a time; but they would be sure to come back in larger numbers. Then we haven't too much powder and shot left. No; the best and wisest course will be to be friendly with them, if possible. I *have* heard of white men living with them for many years. I saw an Englishman myself once who had been with them for five years. He was glad enough to get away from them; but they treated him kindly, he said. One man, whom I never saw, lived with them for thirty years. His name is Buckley, and he is living now.'

'Do you know anything of his story?'

'I'll tell you what little I know. He was a bricklayer in Cheshire—came from Macclesfield,

I've heard. A great big hulking lazy fellow he was—brick-making was too hard work for him, so he enlisted as a grenadier. A fine grenadier he must have looked—he was six feet six inches in his stockings. But grenadiering didn't satisfy his wants. He was a natural vagabond like myself, and he got into trouble, and was sentenced to transportation. So he and three or four hundred other natural and unnatural vagabonds, being deemed fine material for the purpose, were sent out to form a colony. Buckley and his mates were put ashore at Port Phillip; but the Governor, whose name was Collins, liked the place as little as the convicts, and he moved them off to Van Diemen's Land. Then they began to talk of escaping. They didn't know anything of the interior of the country; but they thought perhaps that anything was better than the devil's life they led as convicts. Buckley got away with two mates, of whom nothing more was ever heard. About twelve months after he escaped, he fell in with the natives, and lived with them for more than thirty years. During the whole of that time he never saw a white man. At length he heard from the tribe he was living with that some men with skins the same colour as his had been seen within a few

miles of the native camp. They belonged to a band of explorers headed by a man named Batman. Buckley went in search of them, and presented himself to them. You can imagine what a sensation he created; a white giant, who had forgotten how to speak English, with native weapons hung round his body, and a kangaroo-skin rug his only clothing. He soon picked up a bit of English, and was taken to a white settlement, where he was made a pet and a wonder of. He might have done good service for the white people with the natives, for they say he has great influence with them. But my opinion of him is, that he is a lazy skulking thief, and that living with the savages, where he hadn't to work for his food, just suited him. I expect that some part of his influence over them was produced by his tremendous height and big limbs. However, he is among the whites again, with a free pardon granted him, I've heard, and earning his living as he has earned it all his life—by doing nothing.'

During the recital of this story, which Rough-and-Ready declared was veracious every word of it, he was busy baking a fresh-water turtle, which he had caught that day while he was fishing in a lagoon. The turtle was baked in its shell, and

they made a delicious supper off it. They had arranged to fish for eels that night, and Rough-and-Ready said,

‘Come along; it’s of no use being frightened by thinking of the natives; we must get accustomed to them. We shall soon see them, and Tom with them.’

They took all their firearms. Minnie had two pistols in her belt, and Joshua and Rough-and-Ready, besides pistols, had guns slung across their shoulders. Each of them wore a cap made of the beautiful fur of the sugar-squirrel. They walked through the quiet wood, looking sharply about them as they went along, but neither heard nor saw any signs of the natives. When they came to the lagoon, Rough-and-Ready told them he was going to show them a fine way of catching eels without trouble. He had his fire-sticks with him; and in half an hour he had a great fire blazing by the side of the lagoon. Attracted by the light, the eels came swarming towards them; and in a very short time they caught as many as they desired. Loaded with their spoil, they made their way back to their gunyahs; and as they got near them, they saw a dark figure glide swiftly away from the spot into the bush.

‘A native,’ said Rough-and-Ready. ‘We must look out to-night.’

‘Or Scadbolt, or the Lascar, do you think?’ suggested Joshua, supporting Minnie, who was clinging to him in alarm.

‘No; a white man couldn’t move away with such a cat-like motion. I fancy I saw his dark skin.’

Thereupon Rough-and-Ready, for the purpose of familiarising Minnie with the idea of living with the savages, and so lessening her fears, commenced talking of them, and continued talking for a couple of hours. By which time Minnie’s fears really *were* lessened.

‘What a number of stars have fallen the last few nights!’ remarked Joshua.

‘Ah, you have noticed that!’ said Rough-and-Ready. ‘And if you observe, they have fallen immediately over this spot, in the direction of the sea. Well, those shooting-stars may have brought the natives here; for although some tribes believe that danger lies where stars fall, or that they indicate the direction of hostile tribes, others have a kind of belief that a great and good spirit may be seen where they fall. They believe that there is a new sun every day and a new moon every night.’

One tribe throws up the sun at daybreak, and another tribe catches it at sunset.'

Here they were interrupted by cries of fear, and by the running towards them of some person who fell at their feet trembling and grovelling. It was the Lascar, who was evidently in a state of horrible fright. He looked more like a wild beast than a man. What few clothes he had on were torn and tattered, his nails were long, and his disordered hair and grovelling fears deprived his features of any likeness to humanity.

'The savages! the savages!' he cried.

He had chosen what he considered the lesser of two evils: his white foes were preferable to black cannibals. Rough-and-Ready looked down upon him contemptuously, and touched him with his foot.

'The cowardly ruffian!' he said. 'I'd sooner trust the Blacks than such as he. Where's his rascally mate, I wonder.—Get up!' he cried, and administered so smart a kick to the prostrate wretch that he jumped up on the instant, imploring mercy.

'Be silent, you chattering imp of darkness!' roared Rough-and-Ready; 'be silent, and answer me. You've seen the Blacks, I suppose?'

The Lascar muttered an affirmative.

‘Well, what are you frightened at? Why don’t you go and make friends with them? They haven’t much the advantage of you in colour, and you are more of a wild beast than they are. Frightened of being eaten, eh? Faugh! they’d spear you and throw you away; you’re not good enough even for them.’ The Lascar trembled the more at this; he was a true coward. ‘What d’ye think of mutineering now, eh? Answer me, you copper-coloured devil, or I’ll make an end of you—where’s your mate, Scadbolt?’

‘I don’t know; I haven’t seen him for days.’

‘Ah, two of a trade never agree. I thought you’d be cutting each other’s throats. Captain Marvel, here’s one of your crew who tried to raise a mutiny. As if that was not enough, he has murdered his mate.’ (It is a fact that Scadbolt was never heard of again, nor was anything ever known of his fate.) ‘Now then, you, as Captain of the *Merry Andrew*, pronounce judgment—death, nothing less—and I’ll take him away and execute it, as truly as I’m a living man!’

There was something so determined in Rough-and-Ready’s speech, and something so threatening in his action, that the Lascar leapt away in mortal

fear. Whereat Rough-and-Ready laughed loud and long, and fired a shot in the air to frighten the Lascar the more.

In the morning, while they were at breakfast, two savages suddenly made their appearance, about twenty yards from where they were sitting. They appeared so suddenly, that they seemed to have started out of the ground.

‘ Now, Minnie,’ said Rough-and-Ready quietly, ‘ don’t scream out, and don’t show any alarm. By the look of those fellows they are friendly, and do not mean to harm us.’

Minnie conquered her fears bravely, although her heart was beating fast, and by the direction of Rough-and-Ready they went on with their breakfast, to all appearance quite unconcerned, and as if the presence of the savages was the most natural thing in the world. The two men who stood gazing at them were naked, with the exception of a girdle of emu-feathers round their waists ; their colour was pale black ; they were tall, with thin limbs and fine chests, and their hair was thick and curly. They had spears in their hands, about seven feet long, made from the stem of the tea-tree.

Seeing that they stood quite quiet, Rough-and-

Ready held up part of an eel towards them, and smiled, and nodded his head gently. Whereupon the two savages looked at each other, said a few words, and disappeared. Both Joshua and Minnie drew a long breath of relief, for which Rough-and-Ready was inclined to be cross with them.

‘They will be back presently,’ he said, ‘in company.’

They had not long to wait. In less than half-an-hour the two who had first presented themselves returned with nearly a score of others. To the joy of the castaways, they saw Tom the Sailmaker in the rear, and they nodded and smiled at him. Seeing that, the savages, who had been jabbering among themselves, made signs to the Sailmaker; and after the display of much pantomime, he came towards his mates. They shook hands with him, and Rough-and-Ready asked him how he was.

‘Jolly,’ he replied. He told them in crisp sentences, all of them, in answer to Rough-and-Ready’s questions, that the natives seemed disposed to be friendly, and that they were not half so bad as they looked.

Rough-and-Ready, accompanied by Tom, then

walked half-a-dozen yards in the direction of the savages, and held out his hands to them. Tom looked at the savages, touched Rough-and-Ready on the breast, and then himself, with sufficiently expressive pantomime to denote, 'We two are one.' Minnie and Joshua stood in the background, side by side, with linked arms. The savages, coming a little nearer, pointed to them, and jabbered unintelligibly, as much as to say, 'What do you do here? Who are you?' Joshua, observing the success of Rough-and-Ready's pantomime, touched Minnie on the breast, and then himself, conveying the same meaning, 'We two are one.'

Here it must be told that Minnie had regained her naturally fair complexion, and that her hair, also fair, had grown to a great length. Tall and well-formed, with bare arms beautifully shaped, with pure complexion, with dreamy eyes, with long hair hanging loosely down, and with the charm and grace of youth upon her, she stood before them in her strange dress of civilised cotton and woodland fur; and her singularly-beautiful appearance had a powerful effect upon the savages. They approached Rough-and-Ready, and felt his clothes, and made friends with him in their primitive fashion; but they kept some

distance from Joshua and Minnie, regarding her with looks of reverence and astonishment. Presently, after much grimacing and flashing of hands and fingers, Rough-and-Ready came towards Minnie, and, to her surprise, bowed low before her, and stood in an attitude of respectful worship. The savages, who were watching him attentively, saw only his back; but if they had seen the merry twinkle in his eyes, they would have been as puzzled as Minnie was.

‘I’ve heard say that every woman is an actress,’ he said, smiling. ‘Prove yourself one now, for all our sakes, by not moving, and by listening to me attentively. Your conduct may decide our fate. I have told you what significance the natives attach to shooting-stars, and how they either avoid the direction in which they fall, or are impelled there by some powerful superstition. Fortune has favoured us. I don’t understand a single word these savages utter; but I understand from their actions that they are so amazed at your appearance as to entertain a belief that you are not quite mortal—that, in fact, you are a superior spirit. If they can be kept in this belief (supposing they entertain it), it will be of immense service to us. If you are brave enough not to

show fear, they will almost be certain not to attempt to harm us.'

No better speech could have been spoken to Minnie to inspire her with confidence and courage. But she turned to Joshua first, and asked, 'Shall I do this?'

'Yes,' he answered; 'I think it will be well, if you can nerve yourself to it.'

Smiling at the 'if,' she said softly, 'For your sake, Joshua,' and then, with queenly motion, walked towards the savages, conquering her disgust at their appearance. They awaited her approach; and when she was within a few steps of them, an old graybeard came forward, and held out his hands, saying some words expressive of respectful welcome. Minnie understood as much by his expressive action. She touched his hands, and waved hers, bidding them welcome, and beckoning to Joshua, touched him on the breast, and placed her hand upon his shoulder. Then, smiling placidly upon the dusky group, she walked away with Joshua, and sat down in the shade of the gunyah. Whatever meaning her pantomime had conveyed, it evidently excited great interest among the savages. They conversed earnestly and excitedly, and pointed to

the sky and to the earth, describing by their motions the action of a star falling gently to the ground.

‘Bravely done,’ said Rough-and-Ready to Minnie. ‘Whatever notion they have in their heads, it is one that will do us no harm. See, they are moving off, taking the Sailmaker with them.’

And, indeed, the natives went away in a body, leaving behind them four of their party, however, who squatted upon the ground, with their eyes fixed upon the castaways.

‘They are left to watch us,’ said Rough-and-Ready; ‘but I think we may make ourselves easy about their being disposed to be friendly.’

He and Joshua went about their pursuits as usual; but to keep up the fiction concerning Minnie with the natives who were watching them, they would not allow her to work, and treated her with such marks of deference as could not fail to impress the savages. During the day, Rough-and-Ready offered food to the savages, who accepted it. To show their gratitude, two of them went away into the forest, and returned with a quantity of honey in a reed basket, which they placed at Minnie’s feet, and which she partook of, to their evident satisfaction.

‘There isn’t the slightest mistake,’ said Rough-and-Ready merrily, ‘that the devil isn’t half so black as he is painted.’

They were left apparently undisturbed for two days, when the natives returned, with different descriptions of food—sweet roots many of them, pleasant and good to eat. ‘They have some plan in their heads,’ said Rough-and-Ready. He was right. Early the next morning the natives gave them to understand that they were going farther inland, and that the white people were to accompany them. ‘Now we shall see something,’ observed Rough-and-Ready as they plunged into the forest. They walked for three days before they came to the native camp. They made short stages to accommodate Minnie. During this time, Minnie kept close to Joshua, as if to protect him; but Rough-and-Ready mixed freely with the natives, and made some snares for game, which he gave to them, and with which they were much pleased. When they were within a few miles of the camp, a number of the tribe, chiefly women and children, came out to meet them. Soon they arrived at the camp, and were surprised at its picturesqueness. It consisted of about a dozen roomy huts, roofed and thatched with bark and

reeds. At a short distance from the huts was a large pool, the vegetation around which was singularly beautiful. Among the strange trees which attracted the notice of the castaways, the umbrella-tree, with its dark leaves and crimson flowers, seemed to them the most remarkable. There were also a large number of great fig-trees, and magnificent palms with feathery leaves. The air was sweet with the perfume of lily and jasmine and the golden-flowered thorn. There was one hut which appeared to be but newly built; it was prettier than the others, and its sides were decorated with wild flowers and flowering vines. Towards this the natives led Minnie, upon whom the women and children looked in awe and wonder. She, clasping Joshua's hand, entered this hut, and sank upon the bed of dry leaves, wondering what was next to come. She begged Joshua to stop with her, for she was frightened of being left alone. So, after partaking of the food which the natives brought to them, he lay down near the mouth of the hut, and she at the farther end on her bed of leaves. Joshua could see the glories of the sunset from where he lay; and he saw the fire die out of the sky, and saw the stars come out. But he was tired with his day's walk, and sleep

overpowered him, although he tried to keep awake. Early in the morning they rose, and walked towards the banks of the pool—

‘To where the weed of green and red
Its floating carpet gaily spread,
Whereon the emerald frog reclined,
Fanned by the fragrance of the wind;
And all was darkened by the shade
The water-weeping branches made—
Save where a paler, tenderer green
Made bright the beauty of the scene.
The birds flashed down, to drink or lave,
With varied note and joyous stave,
And plunging sidelong from the reeds,
That wavered ’mid the water-weeds,
Plashed in the stream so cool and calm,
O’erhung by many a fern-tree palm;
And bell-bird peals, whose silvery chimes
Found in the rippled water rhymes,
Throughout the perfumed thicket rang,
Whence the tall-headed bulrush sprang.’

CHAPTER VII.

THE POWER OF MUSIC.

THE natives were busy preparing for a grand Corroboree, which, being interpreted, means a grand gathering and celebration in honour of some imposing event. Scouts were sent out in every direction, and every hour brought fresh comers, who evinced the greatest possible curiosity in the white people. At one time nearly sixty members of a different tribe arrived in a body, and a fierce jabbering took place between the old men of the tribes. Rough-and-Ready, who had by this time picked up a few native words, came to Minnie and Joshua with a look of concern on his face.

‘They are quarrelling about us,’ he said. ‘As far as I can understand, this new tribe lay claim to us for having been found in a country which they say is theirs. I think I know how they will settle it, if they settle it at all peaceably.’

‘How?’ asked Joshua anxiously.

‘They will separate us—two for each of the two strongest tribes.’ Minnie caught Joshua’s hand convulsively. ‘I know what you mean, my dear,’ said Rough-and-Ready, a little sadly; ‘you and Joshua must not be parted. And indeed, it would not be right; you belong to one another. Well, the Sailmaker and I will go our way and you will go yours. Only you must be cunning and keep together. Joshua, to-night, before the natives go to sleep, play a few soft airs upon your accordion. You and Minnie must be in your hut together while you play. And don’t let them see the accordion. The music will fill them with wonder, and it will be a strong reason with them why you should not be parted. But indeed, my dear, if you continue to act your part well, there will be no fear of that.’

‘You are a good man,’ said Minnie gratefully, holding out her hand to Rough-and-Ready.

He took it and pressed it to his lips, and held it in his with infinite tenderness.

‘No, my dear,’ he said, ‘I am not a good man. You have seen me at my best. I am a convict, and when I came on board the *Merry Andrew*, I was trying to escape from the colony. There’s many a black mark against me which I

doubt will never be wiped out in this world. I was a little sinned against at first, it is true, but I had my revenge afterwards; I couldn't be meek and humble under undeserved punishment. There! that's all I shall tell you about myself. Your imagination must fill in the outlines. And, mind you! you can't make me out worse than I am. I am glad I have made this confession, lame and bald as it is; it has relieved my mind.' He turned his back to them, with a motion which said, 'You see what a vagabond I am; I am not fit company for such as you.'

But Minnie laid one hand upon his shoulder, and with the other turned his face towards hers.

'You are a good man,' she repeated earnestly, looking into his eyes, which were filled with tears, 'and I honour and respect you.'

'And I, too,' said Joshua, grasping his hand heartily. 'If it should be our good-fortune to meet under happier circumstances than these, I will show my gratitude to you.'

'There, there, there!' exclaimed Rough-and-Ready, half roughly, half tenderly; 'enough said about the past. We sha'n't be together much longer, as I've told you, and as you'll soon find. We must take things as they come, and make the

best of them. Do you know the natives have a curious fancy about you?' he said to Minnie. 'There was once in their tribe a young woman of rare beauty and virtues, who was idolised by all. I don't know how long ago this was, and it is only by piecing stray words and actions together that I have been able to understand it. Well, this young woman, by some means or other, was transformed into a star. They believe you to be her, having taken mortal form again to visit them. 'Tis a pretty fancy, isn't it?'

'But I am white, and——'

'She was black,' interrupted Rough-and-Ready gaily. 'That is easily accounted for; they believe that when they die they jump up white. If you were of their colour, they would not have the fancy about you.'

By the evening there were not less than a hundred and fifty savages collected together. Although the weather was warm, they were lying down before their camp-fires, with the exception of one group of about twenty old men and doctors of the principal tribes, who were earnestly engaged in discussing matters relating to the white people. An old chief of the tribe who had first discovered the castaways was on his feet, declaim-

ing violently, with extravagant action, in which, nevertheless, there was much dignity. Opara was his name. His hair and beard were white, and his face and body were scored with ugly seams gained in battle, or in the exercise of the strange rites and ceremonies of his tribe. On his neck and breast, and from his shoulders to his hips, were still to be seen, old as he was, the gashes made in his youth to entitle him to the dignity of manhood. A great chief was Opara—wise in council, fearless in battle, and had been the most skilful of all his tribe with boomerang and spear and middla, and in throwing the wirra.

‘The strangers are ours,’ he said; ‘the sacred crow, Karakorok, witnesseth that they are ours by right. The heavens were filled with light, and great voices thundered. We listened in awe. Fire rent the mountains, and made new caverns sacred. Light dived into raging waterfalls, cutting the earth. We waited full a moon. The storm ceased; the spirits spoke no more. We waited another moon. The stars fell near the sea—into it. We went there, wanting to know. We brought the strangers back. They are ours.’

Up rose Wealberrin, chief of the other tribe. No less famous he than Opara. White-bearded

too, and tattooed from top to toe, and no less cunning with war and hunting weapons. Around his waist was a belt made of the hair of the enemies he had slain in battle.

‘Not so,’ he said. ‘The *land* is ours. There, in Pandarri Kurto (heaven’s cavern), lie our mintapas—our doctors. There are our hunting grounds—our fishing lands. There we make men of our sons. Shall I take Opara’s food, and call it mine by right? He would reply as becomes a warrior. If I ask, he would give. But I ask not now. The land is ours. What is found on the land is ours.’

‘Once lived Mirgabreen,’ said Opara. ‘Bright-eyed, fleet-footed, hollow-backed. Her tongue spoke the music of the birds. Her dark hair hung down to her arched feet. She could shroud her glory in it—as night the day. She was beloved by all. Too bright for earth, she lives in the heavens now, a star. She looks down on me. She hears me speak. So dwelt with us a maid, whose supple limbs cleaved the water, who sang the music of the woods. The trees bent to her as she walked. The branches bowed before her, and whispered to her, and she replied. She left us for the grand vault where moons are made.

What was ours is ours. She has come back to us. She is ours.'

'So be it,' said Wealberrin. 'The others then are ours. Opara has spoken.'

'She has with her a mate,' said Opara, 'whom she has touched upon the breast. Let Wealberrin take two—we two. Then we shall have peace.'

Wealberrin would have replied, but as he rose to his feet a wondering expression stole into his face, and into the faces of all assembled there. For from Minnie's gunyah issued sounds so soft and sweet that the night-birds hushed their voices to listen. The breeze was so light that the melodious notes hung upon the air, and lingered long before they died away. The savages clutched each other, and stood transfixed with fear and wonder. What voices were these that were speaking? In their dreams they had never heard anything so sweet. Opara had said it. Minnie had come from the vault where the moons are made, and was speaking to the spirits of another world. Motionless, with bended heads or with forms inclined towards the sound, they stood like figures of stone, in reverential attitude. And did not move a limb when the music ceased; for a shadow fell upon the moonlit space, and Min-

nie came to the opening of the gunyah and looked in dumb amazement at the strange scene before her.

And now the day has come upon which the grand ceremony of the Corroboree is to be celebrated. The rival tribes have settled their dispute. Rough-and-Ready, who is the Chorus of the party, tells his friends that Joshua and Minnie are to remain with Opara's tribe, and that he and the Sailmaker are to be attached to Wealberrin's. Joshua hints at resistance, but Rough-and-Ready declares it would be madness.

'If there was no woman in the case,' he says, 'I might counsel differently; but for Minnie's sake we must have no fighting. We might kill a score or two of the natives, but you must bear in mind there are half a thousand of them here now. Then their spears are poisoned. Suppose one should strike Minnie. No, no; submission is our best course.' So, with much grief, they are compelled to make up their minds to submit.

All day long, there is great feasting. An emu has been hunted down, and the fat carefully distributed among the natives; honey and sweet roots have been brought in in abundance, and the bushes have been stripped of their fruit.

Rude seats of vines, decorated with flowers, have been placed for Minnie and Joshua in front of their gunyah, and in front of the seats a kind of arched screen of leaves and branches has been erected, through the network of which they can see and be seen. When night comes, fires are lighted, the flickering flames of which give birth to monstrous shadows that flit about the trees, and fill the woods with grotesque shapes. Minnie and Joshua watch with a kind of wonder the shadows created by the fire nearest to them. Now the light goes down, and the black shapes dart through the woods, or run swiftly along the branches, ravenously, and with cruel intent, as it appears; anon, the flame leaps up, and the shadows fly and shift restlessly about, with lightning speed, as if suddenly surprised by an enemy. Their attention, however, is soon diverted from these inanimate creations. The natives are assembling. Men, women, and children troop in from all quarters, and seat themselves round and about the fires in somewhat orderly fashion. There cannot be less than five or six hundred of them. All being seated, a long silence ensues, broken at length by a circle of singers, who chant a monotonous song, narrating how they had jour-

neyed towards the sea into which stars were falling, and how they had found the strangers, and brought them to their camp. As they sing this song over and over again, they beat time with their clubs. A brave then chants a tradition of one of their ancient chiefs, who was compelled to fly before a hostile tribe; all his young warriors were slain, and he alone escaped; but his enemies, determined to put an end to him, set fire to the bush around him, and he was encircled by a net of flame. Suddenly the earth opened, and water stole up from the caverns and extinguished the fire, and so the chief was saved, and a great river was made, in which fish was plentiful. In the midst of the silence which follows this song, a man springs from out the shadows. His face is crossed with lines of red and yellow, and his body is painted white. In his hand is a branch of green leaves, and a great tuft of emu-feathers is on his head. He stands perfectly still for full a quarter of an hour, looking into the sky for the spirits of dead men. What inspiration falls upon him at the end of that time it would probably be difficult to explain; but he waves his branch of green leaves to and fro, and the singers strike up another song, and the musicians beat time as

before with their war-clubs, while the chief actor in the scene rushes about, and flourishes his arms in a gradually worked-up state of the wildest excitement. He vanishes in the shade as suddenly as he had appeared, and in his place leap a dozen men, presenting so startling an appearance that Minnie clasps Joshua's hand in sudden alarm. Flowers are twined round their ankles and above their knees. Some have tails of dingoes wound about their heads, others wreaths of down from the white cockatoo; some have tails of wallabies attached to their peaked beards, and all have feathers in their hair. White rings are round their eyes, their noses are striped, and lines of red, yellow, and black are painted from their shoulders and breasts down to their waists, where a white ring encircles them. The singers burst into song again, and the hideously-decorated figures begin to dance, advancing towards the singers and retreating from them; their motions at first are slow and tremulous, but soon they are leaping and jumping frantically from side to side, each trying to out-tire the others, with such violent exertion as to cause them presently to fall upon the ground in a state of exhaustion. As soon as each recovers, he rises, and dances by

himself, and the women utter cries of commendation, and beat the ground in ecstasy. These performers are followed by others, who dance in a serpentine line, until they present the appearance of a serpent coiling and uncoiling itself; as they dance, they make a hissing sound with their tongues, to imitate the hissing of the serpent. And so through the night the Corroboree continues, until, thoroughly worn out, the savages retire to their rest, and the woods, that a while ago were filled with such strange life and sound, are lying quiet and solemn in the peaceful light of the stars.

Wealberrin and his tribe are ready to start, and Rough-and-Ready and the Sailmaker have come to wish Minnie and Joshua good-bye. They go into the woods, out of sight of the natives, and sit sadly upon trunks of trees that have been blown down by storms.

‘I have heard say, or have read somewhere,’ says Rough-and-Ready, striving to speak gaily, ‘that life is made up of meetings and partings, so that this is quite a natural thing, and not to be repined at. What we’ve got to do is to make the best of things.’

‘ It might be worse,’ says Tom the Sailmaker, good-naturedly assisting Rough-and-Ready to cheer Minnie’s spirits.

‘ Bravo, Tom !’ exclaims Rough-and-Ready. ‘ It might be a good deal worse. We have escaped greater dangers than the present one, and if we act wisely and bravely we shall escape this. But it all depends upon ourselves, and if we lose courage, we lose all. You must bear that in mind, my dear. Why, this day twelve months we may be talking together, and smiling at these experiences which now seem so hard to bear !’

But Minnie only smiles sadly in reply, and Joshua asks Rough-and-Ready if there is anything they can give him to enable him to bear them in remembrance.

‘ Nothing is needed,’ replies Rough-and-Ready. ‘ We have not been together for a very long time, but our acquaintanceship has been sufficiently eventful to cause us never to be able to forget each other. Yet I should like one thing,’ with a tender glance at Minnie.

‘ What ?’ she asks, learning by his look that it is something in her power to give.

‘ A piece of your hair, Minnie,’ he says.

Minnie desires Joshua to cut off a lock with

his knife, and he cuts a thick tress and gives it to Rough-and-Ready, who winds it round his finger and puts it into his pocket.

‘Now,’ he says, ‘for a little sensible talk. Your sole aim must be to endeavour to work your way near to the settled districts, where you may have the chance of falling in with white people. Southward lies your chance of being rescued. Every day the squatters are coming farther inland in search of new ground for cattle-stations, and every day this fresh opening up of the country adds to the chances of escape. Whosoever lot it is to first fall in with our countrymen must tell them that there are two white people living with one of the native tribes who are desirous of getting into civilised company again. That will make them look out for us perhaps. You will find that stockmen and bushmen are as fine and manly a set of fellows as you would desire to meet. I think you have the best chance of first hearing the crack of a stockman’s whip, for your tribe is more of a southern one than ours.’ Then Rough-and-Ready told them, as much for the purpose of diverting Minnie’s attention from the sad parting near at hand as for any other, of the wonderful enterprise of the Australian pioneers of

progress, of the dangers they cheerfully encounter, of the unknown country they bravely plunge into, of the hardships they bear and make light of, and of the grand future that awaits the beautiful Australian continent.

‘To my thinking,’ he says with enthusiasm, ‘there is no life that contains so much pure enjoyment as the life of a backwoodsman. I would not change it for any other—only I would prefer, for occasional mates and companions, white people instead of savages. I don’t believe man was intended to live in close cities.’

‘But even such a life as you describe,’ says Joshua, ‘leads to the making of great cities. The pioneers go first, and the masses follow.’

‘That’s the worst of it,’ says Rough-and-Ready; ‘they follow, and are not content to live naturally. They make streets, and cramp them up with just room enough for a score of men to walk abreast in. Down in Sydney there are streets, as you know, where not half-a-dozen men could walk abreast through; but that’s the way of all cities, large or small. Directly new land is opened up, in troop the masses, as you call them, who make their streets and build their houses as if there wasn’t an inch of ground to spare; while

all around them are thousands and thousands of miles of lovely country, with trees, and flowers, and fruit, and fish, and game, inviting them to come and enjoy life as it ought to be enjoyed !'

'Well,' says Joshua, ' 'tis the way of the world. You were never intended to live in cities, that's clear.'

'I don't know. I daresay, once upon a time, I should have thought I was mad if such ideas as I have now had entered my head. I wasn't always so rough as I am now. But cities are necessary, I suppose ; and it's folly to talk as I do. Why, I don't doubt that in less than fifty years a city will be built even here in these wild woods ; and perhaps on this very spot where we now sit they'll build a prison.' He speaks these last words with a dash of bitterness ; but he soon shakes off his cynical humour, and proceeds to speak of more important matters concerning the present. 'Be especially careful of one thing,' he concludes, 'never by any chance let them see your accordion.' (Joshua had it slung round his shoulders, wrapped in a bag of fur which Minnie had made for it.) 'When you play, let the natives *hear* the music, not *see* where it comes from. By that means you will best preserve your influence and Minnie's

over them. And bear in mind—work southward.'

Here two natives make their appearance, and after looking attentively at the white people, glide away quietly.

' 'Tis time to go,' says Rough-and-Ready, jumping to his feet; 'that is their delicate way of telling us that they are waiting.' Minnie, with streaming eyes, raises her face to his. He stoops and kisses her, and says tenderly, 'God bless and protect you, my dear!' The four of them shake hands sorrowfully, and part—never again to meet on earth. So Rough-and-Ready and Tom the Sailmaker disappear from the yearning gaze of their friends, and from this story; and Joshua and Minnie are left thus strangely alone.

CHAPTER VIII.

HARSH JUDGMENTS.

THE foundering of the *Merry Andrew* and the loss of every soul on board were duly recorded in the newspapers, and utterly shattered the happiness of that humble home in Stepney wherein love and content had dwelt for so many years. If Mrs. Marvel's daughter Sarah, who has played an insignificant part in this history, had been at home, unmarried, her parents might have derived relief and consolation in watching the progress of her fortunes; but Sarah had had the rare good fortune to be quickly wooed and quickly won by a country mechanic, and her subsequent career has nothing in common with these pages. So that Mr. and Mrs. Marvel were left alone in their unhappy position. They could not bear to live longer in the house in which Joshua had been born and reared, and they agreed to Dan's proposition, that they should move, and live with him and his sis-

ters. What added to their unhappiness was, that they were at war with every one of their neighbours. When the news of the loss of the Merry Andrew reached Stepney, the neighbours one and all decided that Joshua was guilty, and many of them declared that the punishment which had overtaken him was a just visitation. To listen to this in silence seemed to Joshua's family to be nothing less than flat treason; they fought stoutly and earnestly against the calumny, and defended the character of their lost son with all the strength of their loving hearts. But vainly. The neighbours persisted in their belief, until George Marvel gave out that if he caught any man speaking against the dead, he would thrash him. He had not long to wait to give effect to his words. He came home one day with a black eye and a bruised face. 'I've been fighting Bob Turner,' he said in explanation, 'for taking away our Josh's good name.' Now Bob Turner was a favourite in the neighbourhood, and the cause in which he received a drubbing was not his alone, but all his neighbours' as well. Was free and fair speech to be burked by such an obstinate and opinionated old fellow as George Marvel? Were they to be deprived of their legitimate privilege of gossiping

and tittle-tattling? Things had come to a pretty pass, when a man was to be allowed to bully all his neighbours because they wouldn't agree with him. The fight between Bob Turner and George Marvel was an exciting topic of conversation in every house for a dozen streets round; and a unanimous verdict was given in favour of Bob Turner, who was looked upon in some sort of way as the general champion of the important privilege of Tittle-tattle. Much sympathy was expressed for him, inasmuch as he had been taken home after the fight with a battered nose and bunged-up eyes, and could not go to his work for a week afterwards. During that week George Marvel thrashed another man, and called a woman unpleasant names; and when the woman's husband demanded an explanation, he received one of such a nature as to convert him instantly into an active enemy. Then Bob Turner, convalescent, made his appearance in the streets again, with traces of disfigurement in his face; and burning with animosity and shame, armed himself with a stone tied in the corner of his pocket-handkerchief, and, swinging his sling defiantly, expressed his regret that Joshua had been drowned, for thereby the gallows had been cheated. George

Marvel, hearing this, went in search of his enemy Bob, and came away again with his hand so disabled by a blow from the sling, that he also could not work for a week. At which Bob Turner rejoiced, and all the neighbours rejoiced with him. After that George Marvel refused to speak to any of his work-mates, and they, in retaliation, passed a resolution sending him to 'Coventry' for six months; which sending to 'Coventry' may, to the uninitiated, be described as the very refinement of cruelty, inasmuch as it ignores the offender's existence, and condemns him not to be spoken to by any of his fellow-workmen. This enforced silence was a dreadful punishment to George Marvel. He bore it patiently enough for two or three weeks; but then it became a horrible torture. To sit at his work day after day, and week after week, uttering no word, and with his work-mates avoiding his very look, was almost maddening. It drove him to something which I am sorry to have to record: it drove him to drink. And the habit that began to grow upon him was of the worst kind. Having no one to drink with him, he drank by himself, and soon began to carry a flat bottle in his pocket, liberally supplied with that national curse—Gin.

Although it may be objected of George Marvel that in his behaviour towards his neighbours he carried things with too high a hand, he acted only in strict accordance with his nature; and indeed, if he had been less dictatorial and more conciliatory, it is likely that the same result would have been produced. It was not to be expected of him to be gentle and self-suffering under the dreadful accusation that was brought against his son, when Mrs. Marvel's conduct was taken into consideration. She could not listen patiently to the revilings of the neighbours; to remonstrate with them, to speak gently to them, to beg of them to be more merciful in their speech, would have been an injustice to the memory of her son. Every tender remembrance connected with him—and ah, how many there were, and how she cherished them!—urged her to defend him. And she did defend him, with all her mother's love, and with flaming eyes and agitated breast; told the revilers that they ought to be ashamed of themselves, and that they must be bad and wicked themselves, else they could not set their tongues to such bad and wicked accusations of the best son that ever blessed a mother's eyes. Poor thing! it was a sad sight to see her make her indignant

defence in public, and then to see her in her room—pale, powerless, trembling—sink into a chair, overcome by the agony of her grief. It was not long before white hairs began to multiply, and before the cheerful look quite died out of her face. And Dan and Ellen worked on, and never lost their faith in the dear one who was lost to them; and Susan, notwithstanding what had befallen, still watched and rose in the night, and went into the street, awaiting the return of Basil Kindred's murderer. But no word of him passed her lips; she worked at her dressmaking in silence, and never uttered a cheerful word. A blight had fallen upon those once happy homes.

They had, however, two friends and constant visitors, Praiseworthy Meddler and Solomon Fewster. Through good and evil report, these two friends remained faithful to them, although from widely different motives. Considering all the circumstances, everything had turned out very fortunate for Solomon Fewster. He confessed as much to himself exultantly, and, curiously enough, gave himself some credit for having brought it about. Every tittle of evidence against him had been destroyed; no suspicion rested against him. Joshua was drowned; and Ellen remained, looking

prettier in her black dress than he had ever seen her. He was sure of her now. He had only to wait. She had an encumbrance, certainly, which he would gladly have dispensed with—her baby-girl, born in sorrow. But he made up his mind that he would be kind to her, if she lived; and this resolve, to his own thinking, atoned for any hand he may have had in Joshua's misfortunes. When he saw Ellen with her baby in her lap, he thought, and thought rightly, that he had never seen a more beautiful sight. 'One day,' he said to himself, 'I shall see her with a child of mine upon her breast;' and he dreamt with tender pleasure, and with no pangs of conscience, of the happy time to come.

So time passed on, and no ray of sunshine illumined the darkness of that unhappy home. Things were going from bad to worse. George Marvel was not a confirmed drunkard, but he drank more than was good for him; and his reputation as a cunning workman was on the wane. He did not work regularly either; he was often absent, and earned less money. His wife expostulated with him many times, and begged him not to drink. He listened without impatience, and said, 'It's of no use, Maggie; if I didn't drink I should

go mad. I'm an altered man to what I was, and I've brought it all on myself.'

'Nay, George,' she said, 'you cannot say that and mean it.'

(It is to be noticed as a singular thing that now she never called her husband 'father,' and indeed had not done so since the news of Joshua's death had reached them. The delicacy and thoughtfulness of a faithful wife's love are not to be excelled.)

'I *can* say that and mean it, Maggie,' he replied; 'I have been the cause of all this. I wasn't content that my son should be a wood-turner; no, I drove him to sea and away from all of us. We might have been as happy as the day is long if he had remained at home. And he would have remained but for me. I remember what you said, Maggie, as well as if you'd said it last night: "If Joshua is shipwrecked, don't forget that I warned you beforehand."'

'O, George!' cried Mrs. Marvel, in an agony of remorse, 'how can you bring my wicked words up against me now?'

'I do not bring them up against you, wife; I bring them up against myself. And they were wise and good words—not wicked ones. I ought

to have listened to them ; but I was obstinate and pig-headed, and thought, like a fool, that I knew better than you. Ah ! but it's too late to alter what is past ; and I've brought death to our son and misery to you, and shame on all of us.'

Then he refused to listen to her longer, and walked away to chew the cud of his remorse, and to drink more gin. To her and to the others in the house he was gentle ; but to everybody else he was a bear. One night he came home in a condition which may be described as neither drunk nor sober. Dan and Ellen were sitting together, and the baby—to whom they had given Mrs. Marvel's name of Maggie—was lying in the cradle, when he came into the house. It belonged to his humour not to show himself ashamed of his new bad habit : when he was drunk he did not slink away and hide himself, but exhibited a kind of reckless defiance, for which it would have been as hard for him as for others to account. So upon this occasion he came into the room, quickly followed by his wife, who never watched him out of doors, but who attended to him in the house as if he were a child. He took his seat in the chair which Ellen placed for him, and sat moody and silent while Mrs. Marvel quickly set his supper

before him. But he could not eat it. He pushed the food from him fretfully, and took his wife's hand and patted it, and then said suddenly,

‘Maggie, we must go away from here.’

‘Go away, George!’ she exclaimed. ‘Where to?’

‘I don't know; but I can't stop here much longer. If I do, I shall bring fresh disgrace upon you. I can't live this life any longer; it is killing me. We have already lost our good name and our good character in the neighbourhood, and where I used to get respect I now get contempt. And, Maggie, I am afraid of myself! A new workman came into the shop to-day, and I heard Bob Turner tell him about us and about our poor lost boy, and speaking of him in such a way—— Dan! Ellen!’ he cried, appealing to them in justification of himself, ‘*could* you stand by quietly and listen to shameful words spoken of our Joshua? Could you restrain yourself if you heard him spoken of as a—— O, but I cannot say it!’

Ellen rose, with flashing eyes and cheeks burning with honest indignation.

‘No,’ she exclaimed; ‘I could not, father. I should tell the wretch he was a coward and a villain.’

‘I told him so—your very words: I called him

a coward and a villain ; and I almost had my hand on his throat, when the other men interfered. But there was a row in the place for an hour ; for I was almost mad. And then the master called me into his room, and told me—what do you think ? Why, that he was very sorry to see the change that had taken place in me lately ; that he was very sorry to see that I had taken to drink ; that I was a good workman, and that I had worked well for him for a many years ; but that if I couldn't behave myself as I used to do, I must find another shop. That was a pretty thing to say to me !—the best workman he ever had, and the steadiest too—no, I can't say that now ; but I could up to a little time ago. I had a mind to take off my apron, and fling it in his face, but thought of all of you stopped me. Instead of that, I asked him what he would have done in my place, supposing he had had a son ; but he stopped me there, and said that he was talking business, and not sentiment. With that I flung myself out of the room, and swore I'd join the Chartists, and teach the masters one day that workmen have hearts——' But Mr. Marvel broke down here, and glared about him in violent agitation.

They let him be, and waited till he was calmer; they had studied how best to humour him. Then Mrs. Marvel said :

‘What do you think we had best do, George?’

‘I don’t know,’ he answered somewhat roughly; ‘I’m not fit to give advice. I was dead against you when you didn’t want our poor boy to go to sea, and I’m rightly served for it; but I’ll never advise again. I’ll be led now, not lead.’

At this point, Dan, purposely, but without attracting observation, pushed the cradle so as to awake baby, and thus caused a diversion. After that, he quietly gave Ellen and Mrs. Marvel to understand that he wanted to speak to Mr. Marvel alone, and the women presently glided out of the room. George Marvel took no notice of their departure, and indeed did not notice it until Dan aroused his attention. Then he said,

‘Where’s Ellen and the wife?’

‘Gone to bed, sir,’ replied Dan; ‘and I’m glad of it, because I wanted to speak to you.’

George Marvel gave Dan a disturbed look, and said,

‘Won’t another time do, Dan?’

‘No, sir; I want to say what I have to say now, particularly.’

George Marvel nodded, and somehow or other, the flat bottle in which he carried his gin obtruded itself unpleasantly upon his notice. It made a bulge in his pocket, and he tried to hide it from Dan, but did not succeed.

‘Will you give me leave to speak of certain things in the past, sir, and not consider it a liberty?’ asked Dan.

‘Say what you like, Dan; I can’t consider anything you say a liberty.’

‘Ah — then I may speak of another thing presently, which makes us all very unhappy.’ (George Marvel shifted uneasily upon his chair, and wished he could get rid of the flat bottle which made itself so conspicuous in his breast-pocket.) ‘We have gone through many changes in our humble life; but for the most part we have been very happy. Do you remember, sir, when father died, how perplexed I was as to how we should live, and how, when everything seemed to be a failure and there didn’t seem to be a ray of hope, you came to me with twelve pounds four shillings in a bag which you had collected for us among the neighbours?’ (George Marvel groaned, and thought, ‘What would the neighbours say to me now if I went to them on such an errand?’

But I was respected then.') 'Well, sir, from that time fortune smiled upon us, and we got on, until the unhappy day came. You know, sir, what father died of; it causes me shame and sorrow to think of, although it is a long time ago. I remember how Ellen and I used to sit here, in this very room, and tremble when we heard his step in the passage—she was frightened, but I was more ashamed than frightened. There was the day poor mother was buried—I shall never forget that night when we sat here in the dark; Mrs. Marvel was very kind to us that day, but indeed she was always that. Jo's mother couldn't be otherwise.' (George Marvel gave a gasp, and lowered his head.) 'It cuts, sir, to speak of Jo in this way; I feel it as well as you. But it may do good. Now I'll tell you what I thought that night of poor mother's funeral, when I heard father stumbling in the passage. I thought it was cruel and unkind to mother; I thought that even if he had the right to bring shame on himself (which I am certain he hadn't, for no man has), he had no right to bring it on us; I thought that perhaps poor mother died sooner than she might have done if father had been a steady and sober man. For father earnt

very little money, and mother had to work very hard to make both ends meet. I have known her get up in the winter mornings at five o'clock, and work and slave till near midnight, and all because of father's idleness. Now tell me, sir, you whom I have always looked up to because you are a just man, could anything justify father in leading the life he did ?

‘Nothing, Dan,’ replied George Marvel, in a low voice.

‘He did not even have the excuse of a great grief,’ said Dan courageously and tenderly. ‘Why, when he died that dreadful death, shamed and shocked as I was, I looked upon it as a mercy to him and to us that he was taken away. Yet, going a long way back, to the time when I was very young, I remember that father was not so very bad ; he used to drink a little, but was not always drunk. It grew upon him, I suppose, until it mastered him, and made him what he became.’ Certainly, Dan proved himself the cunningest of physicians ; he had brought home to George Marvel a consciousness of the abyss towards which he was walking, and had executed his task tenderly, wisely, and without giving offence. ‘Now, come, sir,’ continued Dan boldly ;

‘let us look things straight in the face. You said you must go away from here—you mean all of us of course. Have you any idea where we should move to?’

‘None, Dan. Only one thing is plain to me—ay, much plainer to me after what you have said—and that is that I must go from this neighbourhood, where once I held up my head and was respected, but where now every man and woman is my enemy. I never will be friends with them again—never! If they held out their hands to me now, I should refuse them, after what they have said of our poor dead boy.’

‘Dead boy!’ mused Dan. ‘Are you certain, sir, that Jo is dead?’ So startled was Mr. Marvel by the question, that he gazed at Dan in speechless astonishment. ‘I haven’t spoken of it to anybody else, but something tells me that our Jo is alive. Yes, sir, you may well stare at me, for every other person but you and Ellen and Mrs. Marvel would call me mad for saying such a thing. I can give you no reason for the belief—for it is a belief, not a fancy. Haven’t you heard, sir, of men being wrecked on strange lands, and living there for many years after they were supposed to be dead? Haven’t you heard of men living

amongst savages, and suddenly appearing among their friends years and years after they were lost? Some such thing, happily, may have occurred to Jo.'

'But it's two years now since Josh went away,' gasped Mr. Marvel; and then added, 'Don't tell mother, Dan; it would drive her out of her senses.'

'I shall wait before I tell her, but I shall tell Ellen when the proper time comes. Hope isn't a bad thing, sir.'

'But hope without reason,' suggested Mr. Marvel.

'Except the reason that exists and the comfort that exists in thinking of the cases that we have read of in stories of shipwrecked men who have been preserved from death. But hope is a good thing always, whether it comes from reason or fancy. And if you can believe as I believe, it will be the better and not the worse for you. Indeed, indeed, sir, you don't know how earnest I am in this. Think of the friendship that exists between me and Jo; I believe it to be something better and higher than ordinary friendships among boys and men. It has grown up with us, until it has become almost a part of our very being. We are never out of each other's thoughts; when he was away on his first voyage

he was always thinking of me, and I of him. And that Christmas night that he came home—do you know what happened then, sir? Ellen can tell you that during the whole of that day I was uneasy about Jo: I had dreamt of him the night before, and my dream made me unhappy, for I was convinced that he was in danger. I had no reason for that, nor had I any reason for telling Ellen that Jo was very near us an hour before he came to the door. But unhappily it all came true as I feared. Now, sir, I have thought often that if Jo was dead, I should feel it and know it—and I don't feel it and don't know it. Something keeps whispering to me, "You will see him again, be with him again;" and I believe that I shall. For last night, sir, I dreamt of Jo, and Jo was alive; and as sure as we're sitting here talking, we shall see Jo one day, and all the dreadful mystery that looks so black against him will be cleared up.'

Mr. Marvel jumped to his feet, and walked excitedly about the room. There was something contagious in Dan's enthusiasm. So earnest, so thrilling was Dan's voice, that Mr. Marvel's heart beat high with the hope in which there was no reason.

‘I have not done yet, sir. When you said to-night that you must go away from here, I was amazed, for it seemed to belong to part of my dream. Jo seemed to say to me, “I can’t come to you, Dan; come to me.” And I want to go to him——’

Mr. Marvel stopped suddenly in his walk, and stood before Dan with a startled look on his face.

‘I want to go to him, or as near to him as I can. The last place Jo was heard of was at Sydney, and the ship is supposed to have foundered somewhere near the Australian coast. Well, sir, if by any means it can be managed, we ought to go to Australia.’

‘All of us!’ exclaimed Mr. Marvel.

‘All of us,’ repeated Dan. ‘Why not? We are miserable here—unhappy here. We haven’t, as you say, a friend in the place. Everybody is against Jo, and believes him to be bad, while we *know* him to be good. I agree with you, sir, that if those we thought were our friends and who have spoken against Jo were to hold out their hands to me, I would not take them. It would be treasonable to Jo. To live on here in this way would only be adding to our unhappiness. I daresay we could manage to get along out there. Mr. Med-

dler says it is a rising place, and a splendid country for a poor man to get along in. You could take your tools, and could get work. I could take my birds, and should be able to get plenty there that I could train. Why, sir, it would be a splendid thing, and the best for all of us.'

'I believe it would—I believe it would,' said Mr. Marvel, his voice trembling with eagerness; 'but where's the money to come from?'

'We have forty pounds of Jo's, sir, that he left for you and me; I wouldn't mind it being spent that way. That wouldn't be anything like enough, I know; but I think I have a friend. However, sir, let us think over it for a little while. I am glad that we've had this talk. You'll forgive me, sir, won't you, for what I said in the first part of it?'

George Marvel made no reply, but, standing by Dan, put his arm affectionately round the neck of his son's friend; then left the room, and comforted his wife by a very simple act. He took the flat bottle out of his pocket, and said, 'Maggie, I have done with this; I shall never fill it again.' And, happily for him and all of them, he kept his word.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. MARVEL SHAKES THE DUST FROM HIS FEET.

DAN took the Old Sailor into his confidence, and the impracticable old fellow excitedly proposed that they should leave Stepney and come and live with him in his barge. But as Dan declared that that was impossible, the Old Sailor's hopes fell down to zero.

'We can't live in this neighbourhood much longer,' said Dan; 'it wouldn't so much matter to me, for I'm always indoors, but it does to Jo's father. I know what he must suffer. You see, what we want is a friend.'

'Ah,' said the Old Sailor, 'what you want is a friend. Well, we'll talk of this again by and by.'

He went downstairs to see Ellen, and found her crying over her baby.

'Come, come, my dear,' he said; 'this won't do; you'll be making an old woman of yourself in no time.' And he dried her eyes with his handkerchief.

‘You’re the only friend we’ve got now,’ said Ellen sadly.

The Old Sailor thought: ‘Says Dan, What we want is a friend. Says Ellen, You’re the only friend we’ve got.’ And he put this and that together, as he had done once before in the memorable conversation he had had with Joshua at Gravesend, when he set all matters straight.

‘What were you crying for, my lass?’ he said aloud.

‘Ah, sir,’ replied Ellen, ‘I don’t mind telling you. I was looking down at baby, and thinking that when she is old enough to understand things—and baby is very quick, and almost understands already, don’t you, my pet?—she will hear such stories from ill-natured people about father, as will make her as unhappy as her poor mother is. When I thought that, sir, I began to cry, and was almost wicked enough to believe that it would be better for both of us to die than to live amongst such bad-hearted people.’

The Old Sailor did not stop long, but walked away in profound thought.

Soon after that, another misfortune occurred. George Marvel told them that he had left his situation. ‘I gave it up of my own accord, Maggie,

he said to his wife, to whom he first spoke upon the subject; 'if I hadn't, I should have done something that would have made the master give me warning, and I should have been disgraced. I can't make sure of myself now; my blood boils up so when I hear a word dropped about Josh, that everything swims before my eyes. I can't help it, my dear. Don't blame me.'

She did not blame him, but said she was sure he had done what he thought was for the best.

'I've worked in the shop, man and boy, for more than thirty years,' he said huskily, 'and I doubt if I shall get another. Trade's overdone. A good many men are out, and I'm not as young as I was. I don't quite see the end of it, Maggie.'

She cheered him and comforted him, and he went out the next morning in search of work, feeling very much ashamed of himself. It was like begging. He came home disheartened and foot-sore, and hadn't a cheerful word or look for any one. 'A nice ending this is!' he said bitterly. 'But I brought it all on myself. I shouldn't have driven our boy to sea.' He seemed to think it was nothing but strict justice that he should take all the blame upon himself. He earned so little money, that presently he had to break into Joshua's

legacy to him and Dan, and it began to melt like magic. Things were getting very bad. The dress-making work, too, was slackening, and Susan and Ellen had many idle days.

Solomon Fewster observed all this with inward satisfaction, although outwardly he sympathised with them, and was profuse in his offers of assistance. But they would not accept anything from him; and very soon the proceeds of the birds he continued to purchase from Dan became their most dependable source of revenue. Notwithstanding that he was careful never to say a word of the past that would be distasteful to them, he did not make much way in their good graces. They did not show this, however; he was consistent in his offers of assistance and in his friendly behaviour, and they could not show ingratitude; but their instincts were against him. He allowed a year to pass before he spoke to Ellen of his love for her, and even then he thought it best first to make sure of the coöperation of her friends. He addressed himself in the first place to George Marvel, who opened his eyes very wide, and was indeed very much astonished at Mr. Fewster's declaration. He had never suspected that Mr. Fewster had an attachment for Ellen.

‘I loved her before she was married,’ said Mr. Fewster to him; ‘but then I saw that she loved your poor son, and I was too honourable to interpose. So I did not distress her by telling her of my love.’

Mr. Marvel thought that that was manly and straightforward, but asked Mr. Fewster why he spoke to him upon the subject.

‘You are in a sort of way Ellen’s father,’ replied Mr. Fewster, ‘and it is due to you that I should speak to you first. I should not be justified otherwise in offering myself to Ellen. I have something to say also, if you will excuse me for taking the liberty——’

Seeing that Mr. Fewster hesitated, Mr. Marvel bade him proceed, and then the wooer cunningly placed before Mr. Marvel certain advantages that would accrue to him if Ellen consented.

‘I should feel it my duty,’ said Mr. Fewster, ‘to see that the man I look upon as Ellen’s father is properly cared for.’

‘Never mind that,’ said Mr. Marvel; he had recovered from his astonishment, and felt a sort of displeasure at Mr. Fewster’s proposal. ‘Never mind that,’ he repeated dryly, ‘but tell me what it is you want me to do.’

‘I want you to give your consent, Mr. Marvel, and to assist me.’

‘Assist you in making a woman love you, Mr. Fewster!’ exclaimed Mr. Marvel. ‘No, no; the matter rests with you and Ellen. It is none of mine, and any feeling I may have in the matter it is but right I should keep to myself.’

‘But you won’t say anything in my disfavour,’ urged Mr. Fewster, alarmed at Mr. Marvel’s coldness of manner, and thinking to himself that when Ellen was his wife, he would have as little as possible to do with the Marvels.

‘I shall say nothing to Ellen one way or the other,’ replied Mr. Marvel moodily. ‘I have no doubt Ellen knows what is due to herself.’ ‘And to Joshua,’ he was about to add, but he only thought the words; they did not pass his lips. When Mr. Fewster went away, Mr. Marvel was very despondent, and thought with some bitterness that he would have spoken to Ellen’s lover very differently, if he hadn’t been so low down in the world. So discouraged was Mr. Fewster by his interview with Mr. Marvel, that he did not speak to any other members of the family, not even to Dan, but came straight to the point at once with Ellen. After all, whom else did it

concern but Ellen and himself? She was sitting in the kitchen, working; baby was in the cradle, and upon Ellen's face were traces of tears. When she and baby were alone, her tears flowed too readily now. Solomon Fewster had prepared himself carefully for the occasion. He was attired in his best, and presented quite a holiday appearance. He bought a bunch of flowers for Ellen, of which he begged her acceptance. With a little hesitancy of manner, she took them from his hand and placed them on the table. There is something in the air of a wooer that betrays his purpose to the woman he loves, and when Ellen looked into Mr. Fewster's face and saw this, she rose hurriedly, and stooped to take baby out of the cradle, intending to leave the room. But Mr. Fewster's hand upon her arm restrained her.

‘Nay, Ellen,’ he said awkwardly, ‘let baby alone for a little; don't disturb her—she looks so pretty in her sleep.’ And calling up a look of admiration in his face, he contemplated baby with an appearance of affectionate interest, which would have won its way to the heart of most mothers at once. But not to Ellen's. Mr. Fewster's tender manner brought back to her the memory of all his disagreeable attentions when they were first

acquainted, and she waited in silent apprehension for what she dreaded was to come. But round about the bush went Mr. Fewster.

‘Things are very much changed, Ellen,’ he observed. She would have resented his calling her by her Christian name on the present occasion, although he had often done so before; but he was Dan’s patron and their chief dependence, and she did not dare to object. ‘Very much changed,’ he repeated. ‘Mr. Marvel, poor fellow, looks quite shabby. He has a difficulty in getting work, I believe. Very sad—very sad. But it’s the way of the world. One man up, another man down. Lucky man that who can always keep up.’

‘He is indeed, Mr. Fewster,’ said Ellen, constrained to say something in reply. ‘But we can’t help misfortunes coming.’

‘No; but we can often turn bad fortune into good. Now, looking lately at Mr. and Mrs. Marvel, who are far from happy, poor things! far from happy, I have been thinking what a beautiful thing it would be to make them easier in their mind as regards their worldly circumstances, for there is no doubt that that constitutes the greatest part of their unhappiness. As for the

other part of their unhappiness—family grief—time will soften that. But time doesn't soften poverty if it is always with you. 'It is a sad thing, a very sad thing, but it is so unfortunately. There is no harder misfortune in the world than poverty.'

'Yes, there is, Mr. Fewster,' said Ellen, who had taken baby on her lap as a kind of protection. 'There are griefs of the heart which are bitterer to bear than poverty.'

'I stand corrected. But then that will be the case with the few, not with the many—with the few who are superior to most people, and who are the more to be admired for the possession of such excellent virtues. I know one woman who is far above all others in this respect, and whom I therefore love and admire far above all other women.' Ellen trembled and turned very pale, but Mr. Fewster proceeded rapidly, fearful lest he had been too precipitate, 'Coming back to Mrs. Marvel—would it not be a good thing to make her comfortable in her mind about her worldly circumstances?'

'It would be—a very good thing,' answered Ellen, in a low tone.

'And it can be done. There is one person who has it in her power to do this for Mrs. Mar-

vel.' Again Mr. Fewster paused until Ellen asked, 'Who is that person, Mr. Fewster?'

'You,' he said eagerly. 'You can do this, and at the same time you can make a man who has loved you from the first day he saw you the happiest man in the world.'

'Stop, sir!' cried Ellen, in a firm voice. 'You must not say what you were about to say. It would be folly—worse than folly—it would be wicked for me to pretend not to understand you. It would be merciful to me, and best for both of us, that you should not say anything more now. I have no heart for anything but my grief and my child.'

So earnestly did she speak, that Fewster was fain to desist. The only words he said were, 'You shall see how I respect and love you: your word is my law;' and straightway left her. But he did not leave her despairingly. One little word that Ellen had unconsciously uttered filled him with hopeful anticipation. She had said, 'It will be merciful to me, and best for both of us, that you should not say anything more *now*.' She had put no impression upon the word; but the wish that 'keeps the word of promise to the ear' imbued it with a distinct utterance to Solomon Few-

ster's sense. 'I must not say anything more *now*,' he thought; 'that opens the way for the future. I must be content for a little while.' He thought he had made a good move, and that he was sure to win the game.

When he was gone, Ellen caught her baby to her bosom, and ran to Dan's room for consolation—almost, as it seemed to her, for protection. There she found George Marvel sitting in an attitude of sadness. He had not had an hour's work for the last fortnight, and half of Joshua's savings was spent: but barely twenty pounds remained. When that was gone! Well, that was what was fermenting in George Marvel's mind now. When that was gone, what was he to do? Sit down and starve? Without doubt, they could not all live upon Dan's earnings; for Dan and his sisters earned barely enough to keep themselves. He groaned in bitterness of spirit to think that he, the only man in the house who could work, was doomed to idleness. He had striven hard, and still strove, to obtain employment—with what success has been narrated. He felt at times as if he would be justified in demanding work, instead of begging for it. Indeed, on one occasion he had asked for work in somewhat defiant tones, and,

being refused, had spoken, out of the bitterness of his heart, of the injustice and hardship that stood in his way of earning food, being willing to work for it honestly. The only answer he received was an order to quit the shop immediately, if he did not wish to be given in custody. The sentiments to which he had given utterance were soon made known to many masters in the trade, some of whom afterwards, in reply to his applications, said they did not want any Chartist in their workrooms. His case was a desperate one indeed. The problem which he was trying to solve as Ellen entered the room after her interview with Solomon Fewster was a common one enough, more's the pity. He would have expressed it in very simple words: 'I must work to live. I am able to work, and willing. I cannot get work. How am I to live?' Ellen saw the trouble in his face, and sat down by his side. He gave her just one glance, and learned what had occurred; for he had seen Solomon Fewster go out of the house.

'I know what has occurred, my dear,' he said anxiously. 'Mr. Fewster has been speaking to you. And your answer?'

'I have no need to tell you, father,' said

Ellen, raising her eyes to his. She said nothing of the bribe Fewster had offered for her love.

George Marvel saw that Ellen had refused Mr. Fewster, and he nodded grave approval; yet, from a sense of justice, was compelled to ask,

‘Have you considered all the circumstances, Ellen? Have you considered the future?’

‘I don’t know,’ she answered; ‘I only know that I have done what is right, and what is due to my dear Joshua’s memory.’

All this was Greek to Dan, and it had to be explained to him. He listened in silence, and was very thoughtful afterwards. He let the matter drop, however, until he and Ellen were alone; and then he told her, gently and by degrees, of his belief that Joshua was not lost, and of his earnest desire to go over the seas and commence a new life. She, listening eagerly, almost breathlessly, pressed his hand to her lips and kissed him again and again, and was absolutely so simple as to share his belief. Hope revived within her; and when Dan said, ‘You are not widowed yet, dear; of that I feel assured,’ she blessed him for the words in which there was no reason.

Other troubles came. Solomon Fewster, strong in cunning, made a new move in the game. His

orders began to fall off, and in a short time he bought one bird where formerly he had bought three. Perhaps he thought, 'If love won't drive Ellen into my arms, necessity may.' It was a cruel device, mean and merciless, and it struck fresh terror to their hearts. They could do nothing but wait and watch the tide come up. And things grew so bad for them that they had to content themselves with two meals a day, and those but poor and scanty ones. Their condition was a strange parallel to that of the unfortunate passengers of the *Merry Andrew* on the raft. There are wrecks on land as sad as any in the records of the sea.

Solomon Fewster, of course, was profuse in his regrets at the falling-off of the business, and offered to lend Dan and Ellen money, which they refused. He renewed his offer many times, not offended at the refusal. 'He wants to buy Ellen,' thought Dan; 'but he doesn't know her. Jo said once that Ellen was not the kind of a girl for a heroine. Would he say so now, if he could see her, I wonder?'

It was in this way that he often thought of Joshua as of one who would be restored to them some day. He had fixed the belief firmly in his

mind, and nothing could shake it. He had no hope of ever seeing Minnie again. She was as one who had passed out of his life for ever. But she lived in his mind and in his heart, and came to him in his dreams. And in the light, often and often, he would muse upon her tenderly and lovingly.

So they lived on, and the tide of adversity rose higher and higher, until they were compelled to begin to pawn things. But a better time was coming. The Old Sailor passing a pawn-shop one day in Dan's neighbourhood—he was on his way to Dan's house—saw Ellen hurry out of the shame-faced door. He was so staggered that he allowed her to escape his sight. He had had no idea that things were so hard with them as that. When he recovered himself, he gave his chest a great thump, called himself 'a blind old swab,' and made his way to Dan's house. He went straight down to the kitchen, prying old inter-loper as he was, and caught Ellen in the act of counting a few—very few—small pieces of silver and copper in Mrs. Marvel's hand. He was so distressed, that the blood rushed into his face. He only desired to see Ellen alone and speak to her, and here he was shaming them in their

poverty. The tender-hearted old fellow was fit to sink into the ground, he was so remorseful. He stammered out a few words of apology, said he thought Ellen was alone, but that Dan would do as well. He went up to Dan, and to Dan's astonishment locked the door. Then he inclined his head melodramatically, to be sure that no one was listening, and, being satisfied, drew a chair close to Dan's.

‘Hark ye, my lad,’ he said: ‘can you and I speak to the point, and without beating about the bush?’

‘I think we can, sir,’ replied Dan, smiling: the Old Sailor's voice always did him good.

‘Frankly, then,’ said the Old Sailor, ‘do you find it a hard matter to live?’

‘Very hard, sir.’

‘No money in the house, eh?’

‘None, sir.’

‘And business falling off?’

‘Fallen off would be more correct, sir. My earnings for the last month not more than ten shillings.’

‘And Mr. Marvel?’

‘About a day's work in the week, sir.’

‘And the money that poor Josh left?’

‘ All gone, sir.’

‘ O Dan,’ groaned the Old Sailor, ‘ why wasn’t I told of this ?’

Dan gave him a sad look, but made no other reply.

‘ And the poor mother,’ continued the Old Sailor, ‘ how must she have suffered ! And Ellen, poor lass ! and the little one ! Dan, Dan ! if I don’t feel to you as if you were my son, I could find it in my heart to be angry with you !’

‘ Nay, sir,’ urged Dan gently, ‘ you are not to blame. We are unfortunate, that is all. We are not the only ones, I daresay.’

‘ Come, now, open your mind to me. Look things in the face. What do you see before you this time twelve months ?’

The practical question was like a blow, and Dan trembled. The answer came from his reason, in which there was no hope.

‘ What do I see before me this time twelve months ? Worse poverty than this—and this is hard enough, God knows ! We are growing poorer every day, and every day it is a puzzle where to-morrow’s food will come from. All our friends have fallen off from us ; when Ellen and Jo’s mother go into the streets, not one pleasant face

greeted them. They come back, sad and suffering. And they must bear it while they remain in this neighbourhood, if they are to be true to Jo. I can understand now how some good people are made bad by the world's injustice. It won't make them bad, I can answer for that; but I'm not so sure of Mr. Marvel. I haven't seen a smile on his face for months; his nature seems to be completely changed. I am almost afraid to think what remorse might drive him to, for he is continually reproaching himself with being the cause of all our misfortunes. He says he drove Jo to sea, when his influence would have kept him at home; and this thought stings him day and night. As for me, I earn very little money now. And I am so stupid,' he added, with an odd smile, yet thoughtful withal, 'as to repine sometimes that we can't live without silver and copper.'

The Old Sailor dabbed his face with his handkerchief in a state of great excitement during this recital, and was compelled to wait until he was cool before he said, 'So, taking them altogether, things are very bad.'

'Taking them altogether, sir,' said Dan, 'I don't see how they could be worse. We have only one consolation.'

‘What is that, Dan?’ asked the Old Sailor eagerly, with a faint hope that it was something tangible.

‘Our faith in Jo, and our knowledge that he is good and true, as we have always known him to be. Poor Jo!’

The Old Sailor groaned.

‘You can’t live on that, Dan,’ he said.

‘No, sir,’ replied Dan with rare simplicity; ‘but it is a great comfort, nevertheless.’

The Old Sailor pressed Dan’s hand.

‘‘Tisn’t so bad a world,’ he murmured more to himself than to Dan, ‘despite its injustice.’ Then aloud: ‘What would be the best thing for all of you to do, Dan, under the circumstances?’

‘There is but one thing, sir; and I might as well wish for cheese from the moon as wish for that.’

‘Perhaps not, Dan, perhaps not. Tell your wish.’

‘I want some money.’

‘Ah! how much?’

‘Enough to take us to Australia, where we could commence a new life.’

‘You hinted at that some time ago, Dan.’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘That’s what you meant when you said you wanted a friend?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘And I took no notice of it, like a hard-hearted old hunk as I am. Do you know why I took no notice of it, Dan?’

‘No, sir.’

‘Because I didn’t want to part from you—because I didn’t want to lose the only friends I have in the world—because I thought only of myself, and how lonely I should feel when you and my little Ellen and the good mother were thousands of miles away. Well, well! Old as I am, I’m not too old to learn from younger heads. Look you, my lad! But stop—we’ll have the women up.’

The Old Sailor went down into the kitchen where Ellen and Mrs. Marvel were, and took a hand of each, and led them gravely upstairs into Dan’s room.

‘This is a family council, my dears,’ he said, kissing them, ‘where we are to speak our minds without hesitation. Dan has been making things clear to me, and I see a good deal to which I’ve been blind, selfishly blind, more shame to me. When the storm came on, I had an idea that you

might be able to weather it ; but you were not strong enough, and human hearts have not been so kind to you as winds and waves are. The winds howl to-day, but a calm comes to-morrow ; the waves dash over you for a time, but presently the sea grows smooth. That's at sea ; 'tis different on land sometimes. You have found it so, my dears, eh ?

They sighed assent, and waited in a state of painful expectancy for what was to come.

‘And here you are with every sail split, with every spar broken, with bulwarks dashed in, and everything adrift. And around you cruel tongues and unjust hearts. What ! with all this craft in view, won't one come forward, and ask, What cheer ? Not one ? And yet you've held out a helping hand many a time, my dear' (to Mrs. Marvel), ‘as I well know, and spared a spar here and a bit of canvas there, with a willing heart and a free hand. But you are pearls, you women, and teach us goodness. The Lord love you, and send you happier days !’

He almost broke down here ; but he recovered himself by a great effort, and continued, somewhat huskily at first :

‘Ah, my dears, I've been in storms, but never

a worse than this has been to you. Look up, my lass !' he cried to Ellen, and pointing upwards to the dingy paper ceiling in so earnest a tone that he found all of them followed the direction of his finger, while a new-born hope entered their hearts. 'Look up! D'ye see the clouds a-breaking? D'ye see the sun tipping the edges with white light? If you don't, take my word for it, the storm's over, and a friendly craft is bearing down upon you.' He paused awhile before he spoke again. "' You see," says Dan to me, " what we want is a friend." Says Ellen to me, the very same day, " You're the only friend we've got." What did I do? Clap on sail and bear down upon you? Not I!'

'Nay, sir,' interposed Dan.

'Hold your tongue, Dan; I deserve to have the cat for my behaviour. Now, hark ye. Before my poor lass here was married to Josh—don't cry, my dear—I made over my little bit of money to them jointly, for better or worse. I daresay it will come to a matter of two hundred pounds. Will that be enough, Dan?'

Dan's sobs prevented a reply, and the women sat silently thankful.

'So look upon that as settled,' said the Old Sailor, rising; 'and make your arrangements.

I'll see what ships are going out, and 'll let you know to-morrow.'

He left the room abruptly, unable to bear the thankful looks and tears of his friends. Besides which, he was almost unmanned at the thought of parting from them. They were the only friends he had in the world, as he had said; and when they were gone, he would be left lonely in his old age. The thought flashed across him to go with them, but he dismissed it at once. Not only was he too old to cross the seas, but he felt he could not leave his barge near the old Tower stairs.

'I should be like a fish out of water,' he thought; 'and besides, I should only be an encumbrance to the poor souls. I shall be in my dotage soon, and they have troubles enough of their own. No; I'll stop and lay my bones in Old England.'

So the faithful old soul set to work at once, and left himself with the very barest pittance to live on, in order to get together sufficient money for the necessities of his friends.

The news soon spread. Some of the neighbours said it was a good job they were going; some were envious; and a few repented of their harshness. These last went so far as to make

slight advances towards Mr. and Mrs. Marvel. Mr. Marvel looked at them angrily, and responded with hard words ; but his wife, a true peacemaker, was more conciliatory. When she remonstrated with him, and begged him to consider that they were sorry because they had concurred in the general verdict of condemnation of Joshua, he said,

‘Let be, Maggie ; if they’re sorry for what they’ve said about Josh, the more shame for them for hurting us as they did. You can do as you like ; I sha’n’t mind your shaking hands with them. But for me, I’ve said I’ll never forgive them, and I never will.’ When Susan was told that they were going to Australia, her dull vacant face suddenly lit up.

‘We shall be near *him*,’ she muttered ; ‘near Minnie too. Poor Minnie ! where is she ?’

The next moment her old manner was upon her, and she relapsed into vacancy again.

But there was one by whom the news of their intended departure was received with a chill of angry despair. Solomon Fewster could scarcely believe it when he was told. He hurried to the house, blaming himself for his stupidity in trying to starve Ellen into acquiescence.

‘This would never have come about,’ he thought, ‘if they had not been driven to it by necessity. I ought to have shown myself a greater friend than ever to Dan. Gratitude would have made Ellen love me.’

To obtain Ellen’s love had become a mania with him. The farther she was removed from him, the stronger grew his desire. ‘Perhaps it is not yet too late,’ he thought. He broke into Dan’s room in feverish haste, and cried,

‘Good news, Dan ! I’ve got a customer for four birds, and he wants them at once.’

‘Here are two bullfinches and two canaries,’ replied Dan with a queer smile ; ‘I thought you would have wanted them earlier. I have others ready, if you want more.’

‘I’ll take them by and by,’ said Solomon Fewster ; and then treated Dan to a long account of the late dulness and the expected revival of trade, and to the certain prospect of there being a great demand for Dan’s birds presently. Dan listened in silence, and discomfited Solomon Fewster by charging a higher price than usual for the bullfinches and canaries. Solomon Fewster thought it would be fatal to hesitate, and he paid the money with apparent willingness ; and Dan gave

another queer little smile as he put the money in his pocket. Then Fewster referred to the rumour, and Dan said it was true.

‘We shall sail in about a month,’ said Dan.

‘But why go at all?’ asked Fewster.

‘We are not able to get a living here, sir,’ said Dan. He did not tell everybody of his fancy about Joshua.

‘If that’s your only reason,’ urged Fewster, ‘stop, and let me be your friend. I promise that you shall never want, especially if—if——’

But he could not get the intended reference to Ellen gracefully off his tongue.

‘I understand you, sir,’ said Dan; ‘but nothing that you can say can keep us here.’

At this point Mr. Marvel entered, and Fewster left. Between the two men there had been an utter absence of cordiality since Fewster’s overtures respecting Ellen. Besides, Mr. Marvel had suspected why Fewster’s commissions for birds had fallen off, and had made Dan acquainted with his suspicions; and this, indeed, was the reason why Dan, whose eyes were open to Fewster’s meanness, had taken a secret pleasure in charging him a high price for his present purchase.

Solomon Fewster tried by every means to in-

duce them to stay, but his efforts were unavailing. The passages were taken, the day was fixed. The Old Sailor made special arrangements for the accommodation of Dan's birds on board ship, and Dan bought a number of young songsters to train on the voyage out, although the Old Sailor shook his head and expressed grave doubts whether the birds would live. As the day of departure approached, the excitement in the neighbourhood grew stronger, and public opinion veered steadily round in favour of the Marvels. The band of the remorseful ones received fresh recruits daily, until, when the day arrived, there were not a dozen of the neighbours who were not sorry for the judgment that had been pronounced against Joshua, and who did not, in one way or another, give expression to their sorrow. Mr. Marvel would not listen to them; the others did, and took pleasure in listening to apologies which were in some sort a vindication of Joshua's character. But Mr. Marvel declared bitterly that he would shake the dust from his shoes the day he left Stepney, and that he was only too thankful to escape from the nest of vipers.

‘You women,’ he said, ‘are too soft-hearted for justice: if a scoundrel who has wronged you

comes crying to you, you look kindly on him, and cry with him, out of the tenderness of your hearts. But for me, when I think of the many years we've lived here, with never a black mark against us—when I think of the good turns we've done for this one and that one, and of the manner in which they have returned our good offices, I'm fit to choke with passion. They tried to disgrace me, and would have seen us starve without offering us bit or sup. But now that we're going, well off as they think, they come whining round us, sorry for the mud they threw at us. The mud didn't stick, that's one comfort. I could dash my fist in their faces when I think of it!

So matters went on until the morning came when they were to go aboard the ship at Blackwall. They had a few little odds and ends to take with them, and a cart was at the door to convey them to the docks. All the women and children in the neighbourhood flocked round the cart to see the last of the emigrants. First Ellen, with her child, got in; the women kissed their hands to her, and murmured to each other that she looked older than her years. Ellen's eyes were blinded with tears as she looked up at

the old house and at the familiar faces in the crowd. Susan was the next: she looked vacantly at the throng, and turned her eyes to her lap, taking no farther heed of them. Dan followed with his birds, and listened gravely, and not without tenderness, to the farewells which greeted him. After him came Mr. and Mrs. Marvel.

‘Good-bye, my dear; God bless you; God take you safely over, my dear!’

In twenty different ways were these farewells and good wishes expressed, and Mrs. Marvel pressed her hand upon her heart, and sobbed till she could not distinguish a face in the crowd that surrounded her.

‘Get in, Maggie,’ said George Marvel; and then, deliberately and gravely, stooped and took off his shoes. He climbed into the cart in his stockings, and bending over the wheel, shook the dust from his shoes. ‘I’ll take no dust from here with me,’ he said, in a loud tone; ‘I leave that and your lying words behind me. I loved you once, and loved these streets; but I’ve hated you and them from the time you turned upon us and made our lives bitterer than misfortune had already made them. By and by, you can tell the men I’ve worked with and been kind to,

that I was glad to go from the place where I was born, and that I shook the dust from my feet before I went away.'

Then, amid a dead silence, the cart lumbered away from Stepney on to Blackwall. There they found the Old Sailor waiting for them. 'I will keep with you until you are fairly off,' he said. They were thankful enough for his company, and as he did what he could to cheer them, and they had plenty of work to do in their cabins, they soon became more cheerful and hopeful than they had been for many a day. Soon the ship was at Gravesend, a place fraught with sad and sweet memories—for Ellen especially. Mrs. Friswell, at whose house the wedding was celebrated, came aboard to see them, and admired the baby, and whispered to all of them, in turns, that if there ever lived a man with a heart tender enough for twenty men, that man was the Old Sailor, and no other. No need to say with what heartiness they all indorsed this sentiment.

A surprise awaited them. On the morning of the ship's sailing, there came climbing up the side Solomon Fewster. He accosted them gaily.

'You were wondering, I daresay, why I hadn't been to wish you good-bye.'

‘We thought you would be sure to come, although at the last moment,’ answered Dan.

Solomon Fewster first rubbed his hands and then his chin.

‘No need to say good-bye,’ he said, with a conscious look at Ellen; ‘I am going with you.’

They were too much astonished to reply.

‘Yes,’ he continued; ‘when my best friends were going, I didn’t like the idea of stopping behind. So I’ve sold my business upon capital terms—capital terms. A good sum down, and a share in the profits for the next ten years. Shall be able to make plenty of money in Australia, eh, Mr. Meddler?’

‘No doubt, no doubt,’ said the Old Sailor, with a disturbed look.

Solomon Fewster, divining that his absence would be agreeable to them, hurried away to look after his boxes.

‘I am sorry he’s going,’ said Dan; ‘but it can’t be helped. We must make the best of everything, not the worst.’

In the tender conversation that ensued, consequent upon their parting from the Old Sailor, Solomon Fewster was forgotten.

‘Write to me as often as you can,’ said the

Old Sailor, 'and I'll do the same to you, though my old joints are getting stiff. You'll soon be settled down somewhere, and you can let me know. 'Tis a sad word—good-bye. But I shall soon be saying good-bye to all the world, my dears.'

He sat among them till the last moment, and first wished Susan good-bye.

Then said George Marvel, as he and the Old Sailor stood hand in hand, amidst the confusion of ropes and cases, 'If there had been hearts like yours among our neighbours, my poor Josh's name would not have been blackened. Heaven will reward you. I couldn't honour my own father more than I honour you.'

The Old Sailor quivered at the stroke; he could better have stood a hard knock. He kissed Ellen tenderly, and she him; and he put a ribbon round baby's neck with a little silver whistle at the end of it. 'In memory of me, my dear,' he said.

'I will teach her that it is the symbol of the heart of a good man, dear sir,' said Ellen, her eyes full of tears; 'and when she is an old woman—if she lives to be such—it may happen that she will show it to her children, and tell them her mother's sad story, and how her life was sweetened by the kindest, dearest, best——' Sobs choked her voice.

The Old Sailor waited awhile until she recovered, and then said, with exquisite tenderness,

‘If she will sound the whistle sometimes when she is a young woman, and I am in my grave, I shall hear her perhaps.’ He smiled thoughtfully at this conceit. And then folded Ellen in his arms, and saying, ‘God bless you, my lass!’ released her and turned to Dan and Mrs. Marvel. She took his hand and kissed it; she could have knelt to him, her heart was so full—too full to speak.

‘I know, I know, my dear,’ he said, and kissed her. ‘I asked you once if you would like to be a sailor, Dan; do you remember?’ His arm was resting on Dan’s shoulder, and Dan drew it round his neck and laid his face upon it. The action conveyed such tender meaning, that the tears rolled down the Old Sailor’s cheeks.

‘When I see Jo,’ said Dan, ‘I may tell him that you never doubted him?’

‘Ay, Dan,’ replied the Old Sailor aloud; but thought, ‘I shall see him before you do, my lad.’ He would not disturb Dan’s faith by uttering the thought.

‘Do I remember your asking if I would like to be a sailor?’ continued Dan. ‘Ah, yes; what

of that day can I ever forget? You taught me to splice a rope, and I showed you Jo's heart and mine spliced, so that nothing could sever them. And the poor birds shipwrecked, as Jo is. We little thought then, did we, sir?' The Old Sailor grasped Dan's hand, and the next minute was in his boat; and the ship was swinging round, hiding him from the loving gaze of his friends.

Through the river that runs to the sea, the ship makes its way slowly and grandly. In the ship's stern, looking with dimmed eyes over the bulwarks, are Dan and Ellen and Mr. and Mrs. Marvel. Good-bye, dear friend! Good-bye, dear heart! Smaller and smaller grows the ship in his eyes. Can they see him still? he is lost in the whirl of boats. No; he is standing up, cap in hand. Good-bye, faithful simple heart, richer in your honest goodness than if you were endowed with all the jewels that lie concealed in earth's depths. He is lost to them now, and they shall see him no more—here!

Lost? No. He is with them every night in their prayers—he dwells in their hearts. To their dying days they think of him tenderly. Blessings on the dear Old Sailor!

CHAPTER X.

SO NEAR, AND YET SO FAR.

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* * * * *

‘MINNIE!’

‘Yes, Joshua.’

‘That is all; I thought you were asleep.’

‘You are very kind to me, Joshua. I feel a little better to-day, I think.’

‘That’s a good hearing, Minnie. Get strong, my dear, for my sake.’

‘Ah! If I could; but I fear—I fear.’ (This last to herself, under her breath.) ‘Sit nearer, Joshua.’

Many moons had passed, and with the excep-

tion that Minnie had grown very weak, only one event of importance had occurred since the departure of Rough-and-Ready and Tom the Sailmaker. That event was the death of the Lascar; and the discovery made a deep impression on Joshua. It occurred within a few weeks of the parting of the tribes. The tribe of which Opara was the chief, observing that Minnie was drooping, resolved to return to the spot where they had found her. By easy stages they travelled near to the rocks where the castaways had landed, and rested there some days, in the belief that Minnie would regain her health. The mysterious influence she had over them was never weakened, and as she and Joshua were inseparable, he shared in the favour which was shown to her. She saw this, and would not allow him to quit her side, fearful lest harm should befall him. One evening she and Joshua had wandered from the native camp to the pool where the Lascar had stolen upon him with the intention of killing him; and they talked together of the villain, and wondered what had become of him. They saw a wonderful sight as they sat and talked. From the distant woods rose an immense army of flying foxes, not less than four or five thousand in number, flying in a straight line

to a distant pool. When they arrived over the water, they dipped down to drink, in regular order, keeping their ranks, so that presently they presented the shape of a perfect curve. Joshua and Minnie watched the singular flight until the last of the animals had satisfied its thirst; shortly afterwards the entire flock disappeared. As they retraced their steps to the native camp, Joshua observed something unusual lying on the ground. It looked like a crouching animal, and Joshua drew Minnie aside, fearing that it might be a dangerous creature; but it remained perfectly still, and Joshua, drawn thereto by an irresistible impulse, slowly approached the spot. To his horror he found that it was a human creature—dead; and turning the face recognised the Lascar. So! his enemy was dead, and this was the end of his animosity. The circumstances of the eventful meeting when he had rescued Susan from the Lascar's pursuit, came to Joshua's mind as he looked upon the dead form. 'His hate of me would not have lived so long,' thought Joshua, 'if it had not been fed by other means. Whom did he refer to when he spoke of his master the day he stole upon me with the stone? But that is past discovery now!' The dead man's face was

distorted by agony, as if he had died in torture, and Joshua looked around for the cause of death. There were a variety of trees near the spot—among them some stinging trees. Joshua knew the fatal effect of the deadly tree, and divined that the Lascar had fallen from one of the higher trees, which he must have climbed in search of food, into the poisonous nettles, and so been stung to death. He could not have been dead above a few hours. Joshua turned away, and told Minnie.

‘You will not leave him there unburied, Joshua?’ said Minnie.

‘No, Minnie, it would not be right. He was our enemy, but there is an end to all that now. Sit down on this trunk, my dear, and I will be kinder to him in death than he was to me in life.’ With his knife and a stout stick he removed sufficient soil to lay the dead man in; as he moved the body, a silver watch fell from a pocket. Joshua picked it up, and involuntarily opened it. There was an inscription on the case, roughly scratched in, and Joshua read, ‘From Solomon Fewster to his Lascar friend.’ Joshua’s heart beat loudly as he read these words. He felt that he was on the eve of a discovery. ‘They knew each other,’ he thought in amazement; and then, like a flash, it

came upon him that Solomon Fewster was the master for whom the Lascar said he was working. Eagerly he searched the Lascar's pockets for more evidence; and found it in the shape of the following document: 'To my Lascar friend: I give you twenty-five pounds in gold, and a silver watch and two knives for services you have rendered me in connection with J. M. And I promise you twenty-five pounds more in gold, if, when you return in the *Merry Andrew*, you have accomplished what has been agreed upon between us.—S. F.'

Joshua read this document twice, and then looked round, as if in expectation of meeting Solomon Fewster face to face.

'Let me fix the villain's features in my mind,' he thought; 'I will raise him before me, so that when we meet, in this world or the next, I may bring his treachery home to him.' With the eyes of his mind he saw Solomon Fewster's false face, and he dashed his fist into the air with a loud cry. 'Fool!' he muttered, recovering himself; 'am I growing as much a savage as those amongst whom I live? Was it Fewster or this villain who stabbed me when I came home?' He looked down, and seemed to find his answer. 'It was your hand

that struck the blow, and he employed you. He was too much of a coward to do it himself, and he paid you for your services as you have told me. And he wanted to get me out of the way, so that he might win the love of my Ellen.' A bitter smile came to his lips, passed away, and a sweeter expression took its place. 'To win the love of my Ellen! No, he can never do that; she is mine till death, and after it, and is as true to me as I am to her. Ellen, dear wife! hear me, and be comforted.'

Concealed beneath his covering of fur, was a small bag, made of stout skin, well dried, containing Ellen's portrait, her lock of hair, Dan's Bible, and the page from Captain Liddle's log-book, appointing him captain. Into this bag he put the silver watch and Fewster's document.

'Rest there,' he muttered. 'When I am dead, chance may direct these relics into the hands of my friends. I will write a statement myself of certain things, and place it with these. Be merciful, O God! and keep firm the faith of my friends.'

The appeal was like a prayer, and its utterance soothed him. He laid the Lascar's body in the shallow grave, and covered it as well as he could with earth and leaves and branches. Then he

returned to Minnie, and they walked to the camp. He did not tell her of his discovery. It would have made her more unhappy.

On another occasion they were sitting together in the woods, in silence and resignation. They had sat so for full half an hour, and not a word had passed between them; their thoughts were with their friends, thousands of miles away. Suddenly there came to their ears the tinkle of a bell. They started, and looked at each other in wonder. A wild hope entered Joshua's heart. The sound was faint but distinct. It was like an evidence of approaching civilisation. Presently it sounded again, and was followed by other bells of different tones, but each note being clearly uttered. Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle! till the woods were filled with music. Creeping slowly and softly in the direction of the sounds, they discovered the cause. The sounds were not produced, as they had hoped, by bells on the necks of cattle, but by a congregation of small birds of a greenish-yellow colour, who, perched upon the branches of trees, in a spot where the trees formed a circle, were singing to each other their sweetest songs. Disturbed by the approach of footsteps, the birds hid themselves among the leaves, and were silent; but Minnie and Joshua

remained perfectly still, and soon the sweet sounds were heard again, and the concert was resumed, to the delight of the hearers.

For many evenings after this Joshua and Minnie came to the spot to listen to the melody of the bell-birds. It was on one of these evenings that an idea in association with the birds presented itself to Joshua. Why should he not employ a little of his idle time in training some of the birds with which the beautiful woods abounded, as Dan and he used to do in their boyish days? He trembled with delight at the thought, and was eager to begin. It seemed to bring him nearer to Dan and the beloved ones at home. He told Minnie of his fancy, and she encouraged it. He would set about it at once; but first he must make a cage. He made one of wicker work, sufficiently large to hold a score of birds; and in a very little while his cage was inhabited by birds as beautiful and almost as docile as any he had taught at home.

All this while they were allowed by the natives to do pretty well what they pleased. Food was supplied to them regularly, and they were not expected to work or hunt for it. Scarcely a night passed without Joshua played his accordion in the

shade of their hut, and the singular fancy which the natives entertained respecting Minnie was strengthened by these mysterious melodious sounds. From time to time the natives shifted their camp, according to the seasons, and they invariably regulated their day's walking by Minnie's strength. Uncultured and savage as these ignorant creatures were, they were tender and kind to Minnie and Joshua, and showed them a thousand little attentions which could only have been prompted by the most delicate consideration. Joshua's fancy about the birds was quite a natural thing in their eyes. Minnie wanted the birds to talk to; she understood the mysterious voices of birds and trees. Their reverence for her was increased when they saw her one day with a golden-crowned honey-sucker upon her finger. This was one of the first birds which Joshua had tamed; he was careful to give it its favourite food—the blossoms of the blue gum-tree when it was in flower, and at all times honey and sweet leaves, and had anticipated the effect it would produce upon the natives, when they saw it perching contentedly upon Minnie's finger.

‘See!’ said Opara, ‘the birds know our Star; she talks to them the language of the trees. From

us they fly, and hide themselves in clouds; but she bids them come, and they rest upon her bosom.'

Soon other birds were tamed and trained; and the wonder spread to distant tribes, who made long journeys to see the Star of Opara's tribe, who understood the voice of Nature, and talked with all the children of the Great Mother; for so the simple savages interpreted it.

But Minnie grew weaker and weaker. She concealed her weakness as much as possible from Joshua, who was very tender to her, very, very kind. He had quite forgiven her; no cloud disturbed the harmony of their strange lives. Bearing always in mind the advice which Rough-and-Ready had given them to endeavour to make their way southward, and knowing the one great wish of Joshua's heart, she had used all her influence with the tribe to induce them every time they shifted their camp to move in that direction, and had succeeded so far, that every season found them nearer to the settled districts. But, although three years had passed, they had not seen the slightest signs of civilisation.

Once Joshua was in a terrible state of agitation. He was gathering sweet leaves for his birds,

when 'Crack!' went the sound of a whip. He uttered a joyful cry, and threw himself upon the ground with all his heart in his ears, for he had not caught the direction of the sound. 'Crack!' went the whip again. He ran swiftly towards it, and listened again. Rough-and-Ready had told him many times to keep his ears sharp open for the crack of a whip, and here it was, at last, after weary, weary waiting.

'You will find, most likely,' Rough-and-Ready had said, 'that it is a stockman looking after some stray cattle. Then you will be all right.'

The thoughts that crowded upon Joshua's mind in the few moments that elapsed between the cracking of the whip would occupy an hour to describe; they may be summarised thus: 'That is a stockman's whip. Thank God for it! I shall see him presently, and he will wait while I fetch Minnie. Then we will go to where his companions are, and I will get some presents for our kind friends the natives. Minnie will soon grow strong; thank God! We will go down to Sydney, and get passage home in the first ship. Then—then—O Ellen, Ellen! O Dan, dear friend! dear mother and father! All will come right—all will be set right. Thank God!'

‘Crack, crack!’ Nearer—nearer. He was close to it, but saw nothing. He looked round carefully, watchfully. ‘Crack!’ Over his head. He turned his eyes to the clouds, and saw a bird—the Whip-bird—flying over the trees, uttering its ‘crack!’ as it flew, taking his hopes with it, and bearing them away to where perhaps he would never meet with them again.

* * * * *

And Dan is sitting in a wooden hut built near the banks of a beautiful river. Seas do not divide him from his friend. They both live on the same strip of land, ignorant of each other’s whereabouts. The same continent holds those two faithful hearts. What is Dan doing? who are with him? what kind of a place is this where he and they reside?

A village in which dwell not more than a few hundred inhabitants. Not free from care, for care is human; but happier than inhabitants of great cities are. There is plenty of work for hands to do; more than there are hands to do it. What luxury there is, is the luxury of Nature—rich fruits, bright flowers, clear atmosphere, sweet air, lovely skies, grand sunrises and sunsets, and sparkling watercourses whose banks teem with graceful shapes and lovely colour. Here a city is

to be formed, and they who live in it and are content shall see it grow up to strength—ay, to manhood—and shall have a share in its increasing wealth. First, tents of canvas to live in; now huts of wood; by and by houses of stone. But these last, though they be stronger, will not bring more enduring happiness. And here is Dan, with his birds, as usual. He earns money enough now. Not a hundred miles away, in the capital of the colony of which this little village is a speck, lives a dealer who comes regularly to Dan's wooden house, and buys such birds as he has trained, and pays handsomely for them. Not Solomon Fewster. He also is in that rising capital, and Dan will not sell him a bird. Not that Solomon Fewster needs them; for he is making money fast, and the miserly passion of accumulation is growing very strong in him. His business carries him often to Dan's village—twice a month, perhaps; and regularly every two or three months he makes some kind of overture to Ellen, who shakes her head, and sometimes answers him, and sometimes evades the subject. Dan has remonstrated with him, and has begged him never to refer to the subject again. But he answers:

‘I cannot help it, Dan. If you knew what

love was, you would know that a man can no more help loving than he can help feeling. It was love that first brought me to your house in Stepney. I didn't want the birds ; but so that I might have the privilege of coming to the house—and of doing you and Ellen a good turn at the same time, mind, Dan—I took a deal of trouble to find dealers in birds who would buy them of me at the same price I paid you for them ; and I shouldn't be telling an untruth if I said that I lost money by many of the birds I paid you for. One man I sold to failed, and I had to take a composition. Well, I didn't know then that Ellen loved Joshua ; nothing was said between them ; and when he first went away he wasn't old enough to know his own mind. He came back, and when he was ill I didn't show a bad spirit to him. After Ellen and he were engaged, I did not desert you ; and I didn't annoy Ellen by forcing my attentions upon her. You spoke to me once about that unfortunate canary that died in my hand when I bade Joshua good-bye. You can't think that I killed it purposely. But you may be able to form some idea of my feelings (which can't always be suppressed, Dan), and of the restraint I had to put upon myself when in the presence of the man who

had taken from me the most precious thing in the world to me—Ellen's love—and you can put down the poor canary's death to that cause. I've no need to say anything more. I've loved Ellen all along, and I've always treated her with respect and consideration. You mustn't debar me from the chance of being happy; Ellen may change her mind one day. It is many years now since I first saw her, a girl; and that I am content now to wait and hope ought to be to you a sufficient proof of my disinterestedness and sincerity.'

To suchlike pleading Dan finds no reply, and so they go on as usual.

To Dan, as he sits with his birds, comes Ellen with her peaceful sad face. She has not found happiness, but she has found peace. Solomon Fewster is not her only suitor. Every single man in the village is enamoured of her, and would be glad to make her his wife. But she tells her story to all, with a womanly purpose. She is married, and her husband went out as third mate of the *Merry Andrew*, and the ship was lost and all hands, as it is supposed. But she cannot believe that her husband is dead; something tells her that he is alive—living upon some uninhabited shore mayhap, and looking forward to the time when,

by the mercy of God, they shall be together again. Her story is repeated from one to another; and some kind souls who have been in the colony a few years come to her and Dan with little scraps of information concerning the *Merry Andrew*—such as the finding of a piece of a figure-head which belonged to her husband's ship, and other similar evidence—which convince them that the *Merry Andrew* was lost off the Australian coast. 'Is it not possible,' asks Dan, 'that some of the crew may have been saved, and may be dwelling now on some part of the uninhabited Australian coast?' 'Quite possible,' they answer; and they relate such instances as they know of vessels being wrecked, and of some of the sailors being saved and found years after they were supposed to be lost. Dan and Ellen derive much comfort from these narrations.

Ellen's little child Maggie is the pet of the village. At the present moment she is playing with her goat in the paddock at the back of the house, breathing in health with fresh air. To-night, when she says her prayers, she will pray that God will please send her father home—a prayer joined in by all of them every night.

Who is this? Susan. In no whit changed.

With the same strange watchful manner upon her as in the old days in Stepney, but never uttering a word concerning Joshua. Sometimes she will go for days without speaking to a soul, and a smile never crosses her lips.

And this gentle woman, going about the house quietly, doing her work cheerfully, with a sweet smile for every one she comes across, and by whose side the little Maggie is content to sit in silence with her hands folded in her lap? This is Mrs. Marvel. You would know her if you had only seen her once, although her hair is nearly white now; for hers is one of the peaceful faces that dwell in your memory and remind you of your mother. As for her hair being nearly white—for the matter of that, so is Mr. Marvel's. It would not do for him to pay for every white hair that is pulled out of his head, as at the commencement of this story.

They sit together on this evening, as is their wont, and as they used to do in the dear old kitchen in Stepney, and talk of Joshua. And George Marvel smokes his pipe, and his wife darns—more slowly than in the old days, for her sight is not so strong as it was—and Dan trains his birds and reads to his friends. They have been sorely

afflicted, but faith and love have banished despair.

* * * * *

On this very evening, hundreds of miles away, Joshua is sitting on the ground in his gunyah, amusing himself and Minnie with his birds. She is reclining on her 'possum-skin rug, looking affectionately and gratefully at Joshua, who has grown very wise in the different habits and natures of the strange birds he has before him. With what care he has collected them! Here is the quaint kingfisher, flitting about as contentedly as it used to flit among the dead trees that lie on the banks of creeks. Joshua, watching it one day, saw it suddenly dart into the water with such eagerness that it was completely submerged; he thought it was drowned, but the next instant it appeared above the surface with a small fish in its mouth, with which it hopped, exultant, into the woodland again. It is a handsome bird, and a singular-looking one too, with its beak about a quarter as long as its body, and its light crimson breast and azure back and shrewd brown eyes. Here is the mountain bee-eater, the wondrous blending of colours in whose plumage suggests the fancy that its feathers must have been dyed in the glorious sunsets of

the South, and that it first saw the light when rainbows were shining. Here are the honeysuckers, yellow-eared, blue-cheeked, and golden-crowned; and the crimson-throated manakin, with its pleasant song; and the spotted finch, with red eyes; and the scarlet-backed warbler; and the pretty thrush, black-crowned and orange-breasted, whose piping in the early morning was the cheerfullest of all the birds; and the yellow-rumped fly-catcher, fussing about, and chattering like a magpie. All these are here, and many others; and Joshua often thinks how delighted Dan would be with them. Joshua and Minnie are clothed completely in fur garments; all their civilised clothes are gone. Joshua's hair has grown so, that his face is quite covered with it.

‘Would they know me at home, Minnie, if they could see me as I am?’ he asks.

‘I doubt it,’ she replies; ‘but they would know your voice.’

‘Shall we ever see them again?’ he asks, more of himself than of her.

She sighs, and does not answer. He may; she prays that he will. But she! The breeze sighs with her, as she thinks that she will never again look upon the faces of her friends. Well!

perhaps it is better so. She desires no happier lot than to die in Joshua's arms, with his eyes looking kindly upon her. She has been growing weaker and weaker every day ; she does not complain, but he often regards her with apprehensive looks, and prays that she may not be taken from him. They live together as brother and sister ; the love he bears for her is as pure as the love he bears for his mother. He speaks to her often of Dan, and she listens with sweet patience. But he does not understand that her love for him is part of her very nature, and that it cannot be transferred—that it cannot change. He does not understand it, does not know it ; he deludes himself with the hope that, if it should mercifully chance that they should reach home, the dear hope of Dan's life may be realised, and that Minnie's love and Dan's belief in her purity may brighten the days of his friend. She knows that Joshua entertains this hope, and does not pain him by telling him how false it is.

So the days pass, and the seasons change. In accordance with Minnie's wish, the tribe moves farther and farther southward, and is rewarded by finding plenty of game in the woods, and fish in the rivers and pools. Summer dies, and the

beautiful autumn brings strength to Minnie ; but the succeeding winter strikes her down. Her savage friends and worshippers are grieved to the heart at her weakness, and she, true to her purpose and to Joshua, makes them understand that health and strength for her lie southward, and urges them on towards the settled districts.

‘If we are saved,’ says Joshua, ‘I shall owe all my happiness to you, Minnie. Once you gave me life ; now perhaps you will give me what is better than life.’

A look of content rests in her eyes as he says this, and she muses upon it for days afterwards, murmuring the words to herself before she falls asleep. Speaking to her of her father at one time, he is surprised to hear her say, ‘Father is dead, Joshua.’

‘How do you know?’ he asks, startled.

‘I feel it—here,’ pressing her hand to her heart; ‘I have dreamt that I saw him and mother together. Some things come to us intuitively ; we do not need to be told.’

‘Do you know anything else about those at home?’ he asks, half awed by her solemn tone.

‘No ; but one other thing I know that I ought not to keep from you.’

He waits in silence for what is to come, dreading to speak. She takes his hand; hers is hot with fever.

‘Do not think me unkind,’ she says, ‘but for many weeks I have felt impelled to tell you, and now that the time is drawing near, I must no longer keep it from you. Can you guess what it is, my dear?’

‘O, Minnie! Minnie!’ he cries, falling on his knees at her feet; ‘do not tell me that you are going to leave me!’

‘I cannot help it, dear,’ she says tenderly. ‘Before the spring dies I shall leave you. I shall spend my summer in another world.’ She repeats the words, as though they conveyed to her some deeper meaning than they implied. ‘Yes, I shall spend my summer in another world. My heart has been wintered in this.’

He strives to reason her out of her belief—tells her that it is fancy—but she gently checks him, with ‘Nay, dear Joshua. ’Tis but a little time to spring. Let us talk of other things.’

Soon the buds begin to come, and the leaves grow green. Minnie hides her weakness, says that she feels stronger, and Joshua begins to hope. But he does not know what motive she has in this

—he does not know that she puts on an appearance of strength so that she may not retard their course southward. In many of their marches she sustains her fainting heart by strength of love. ‘Nearer, nearer,’ she whispers to herself; ‘he shall owe all his happiness to me.’

Come there to the camp one day some members of another tribe, who speak of having seen men of the colour of Joshua and Minnie a couple of hundred miles to the south, mounted on strange animals. These aboriginal wanderers, indeed, are at variance with one another; some say that men and animals are one; others that they are distinct creatures. Opara tells Joshua and Minnie who are able by this time to understand the native tongue, and to make themselves understood.

‘What Opara says is good,’ says Minnie. ‘We will go towards these men. They are our brothers. They will give me back my strength.’

Opara being gone, Minnie asks Joshua what he thinks. Joshua, with eager voice and sparkling eyes, cries that they are stockmen on horses, as Rough-and-Ready had told them.

‘All will yet be well,’ he says, his voice trembling with joyful emotion; ‘in a few months perhaps we shall be among white people again.’

She listens in silence ; and presently, in accordance with their nightly custom, he takes his accordion from its bag of fur, and plays the sweetest airs he knows. ‘Poor Tom Bowling’ and ‘Bread-and-cheese and Kisses’ are his principal themes ; and as he plays, the newly-inspired hope stirs into life his dearest memories, and brings before him those pictures of his boyish days that he most loves to dwell upon.

CHAPTER XI.

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.

THE river runs onward like a sparkling stream, now rushing between high banks of forest land, dotted here and there with miniature islands of rocks covered with lichens and shrubs, now settling into a still-looking reach, its surface covered with delicate mauve-coloured water-lilies. Near to a great grove of palms upon the river's bank the native camp is fixed; and not far from the spot the channel forms a descent, more steep than abrupt, where it is cut up into hundreds of brawling streams by islands of beautiful shrubs. The natives have pitched their camp here, in accordance with Minnie's wish; they have been marching southward for more than a week, and Minnie has borne up bravely; but her strength has failed her at last, and she is compelled to succumb. It is understood among them that their Star is sick,

and the mintapas (doctors) are anxious to practise their healing arts upon her, but their efforts are firmly and gently repulsed by Joshua. For this, they look upon him with no friendly eye, and but for Opara his life among them would not be so pleasant as it has been. He pays no heed to them; his anxiety concerning Minnie engrosses all his thoughts now.

She is sinking fast, and has grown so weak that he is obliged to carry her about. The spot she most loves is where the river is still and quiet; there she will lie for hours, with Joshua by her side, watching the shifting shadows of the clouds in the water's depths. She says but little; but every time her eyes turn to Joshua, they are filled with gratitude and love. Once she expressed a desire to write something, and Joshua makes a little ink with paint and gum-juice, and makes a pen from a duck's quill; but paper he has none.

‘Your Bible,’ says Minnie.

He gives it to her, and she writes a few lines on the blank page at the end. Then she tears out the leaf, and folding it carefully says, ‘This is for Dan, when you see him’ (having a full faith that Joshua and Dan will meet); ‘do not read it, but place it carefully by.’

He puts it with Ellen's lock of hair in the bag he wears round his neck.

That same night a change comes over Minnie. He has been away from the hut for a few minutes, and when he returns he sees her sitting in a listening attitude with her hand to her ear.

'Minnie!' he exclaims; but she holds up a warning finger, and says,

'Hush, Joshua! I am listening to the singing of the sea. Is it not sweet?'

His heart beats rapidly, and he takes her disengaged hand in his, and asks her what she has in the hand she is holding to her ear.

'It is a shell,' she says. She shows it to him, and her face assumes the exact childlike expression of pleasure and simplicity it wore in the farewell interview he had with her before he first went to sea.

'You know me, Minnie?' he says, distressed.

'Yes, dear Joshua! What a question! But you must not be angry with me. I took the shell—but I took it for you.'

'Nay but, Minnie,' he says, striving to arrest her wandering thoughts, 'listen to me——'

'Call me Little Minnie,' she pleads like a child, in the softest of voices.

‘Little Minnie!’ he sighs, with an almost broken heart.

‘Little Minnie! Little Minnie!’ she repeats. ‘The shell is singing it. Hush!’ She remains silent for some time after this, and Joshua deems it best not to disturb her. An hour may have passed when she calls to him.

‘Say that again, Joshua,’ she says.

Wondering, he asks her what it is she wishes him to repeat.

‘Nay,’ she answers, ‘that is to tease me. But you must say it after me, word for word: “What you did, you did through love, and there could not be much wrong in it.”’ He recognises his own words to her, and in a troubled voice he repeats, ‘What you did, you did through love, and there could not be much wrong in it.’

‘I am satisfied,’ she says; ‘you have made me happy. I shall try to sleep now.’

He covers her with a rug, and watches by her side during the night.

He has no heart for his birds, and were it not that she takes a childish delight in them, and is glad to have them around her, he would have taken them to the woods and set them free. She does not recover consciousness of her true position;

she believes that she and Joshua are children together, and—it may be happily—all the horrors through which she has passed have faded from her mind. Her great delight is to play with the birds and listen to her shell. Sometimes the fancy that he is at sea possesses her, and she talks to him of himself, as she used to talk to Dan, and coaxes him to tell her the story of the death of Golden Cloud and other incidents of his boyish life. In this condition she remains for many days, until a time comes when she awakes from a deep sleep, and says, in her weak voice, ‘I have been dreaming, Joshua. I thought we were children again.’ Then opening her hand with the shell in it, looks at it, blushing, and says, ‘It is the old shell, Joshua. You remember.’

‘Do you feel stronger, Minnie?’

‘No, dear; I shall not grow stronger. It will be as I told you a little while ago. Spring is not gone yet; but it will be soon. Have they asked about me?’ meaning the natives.

‘Yes, many times every day, Minnie; and have brought their choicest food for you regularly.’

‘They have been very kind to us. Rough-and-Ready was not quite right about them. I used to tremble with fear when he spoke of them. Poor

Rough-and-Ready and poor Tom ! What has become of them, I wonder !

They muse sadly over the memory of those two good friends.

‘Some lives are very hard, Joshua,’ she continues. ‘His was, I am sure. I suppose it was as he said, and that he has done bad things. Yet how kind and gentle he was to us ! It is hard to reconcile ; but it seems to me, my dear, that our lots are shaped for us. We can’t help our feelings ; we don’t make them ; they come, and we must act as they prompt us to act. Opara and the savages now : they couldn’t help being born savages, and they have had no good teaching. Don’t think me wicked for what I am going to say, my dear.’

‘No, Minnie ; go on.’

‘Well, I can’t help believing that a good deal of what is called wrong is not wrong, and that bad is not always bad. I can’t explain exactly what I mean, but I feel it.’ She appears to think that she has got out of her depth, and suddenly changes the subject. ‘Take me out, and let me see Opara. You must carry me ; I am not as heavy as I was.’

He lifts her in his arms, and carries her, with her arm round his neck, out of the hut towards

the savages. They crowd round her, and she speaks a few words to them, and smiles upon them. Then, by easy stages, he carries her to her favourite spot by the river's side, and there they rest.

‘All rivers have currents, Joshua?’

‘Yes, my dear.’

‘Even this, that looks so still and quiet?’

‘Even this, my dear; the current is running, although you cannot see it. But remember, the river is not so still everywhere. A very few miles away it is full of life; it is rushing over the rocks, and is never still for an instant day and night.’

‘Strange! So restless there, so quiet here! It has been so with me: so restless there, so quiet here! Look! we can see the fish in the clear depths. How beautifully the wild jasmine smells!’

He gathers a little for her, and a bunch of fringed violets, and she puts them in her breast. Then she encourages him to talk of home, and listens with sincere pleasure to his praises of Dan.

‘It is good to be loved by such a heart,’ she muses.

‘Ah, Minnie!’ he ventures to say, ‘if it could have been with him as he once hoped it would!’

‘About me?’ she replies unhesitatingly. ‘Does not that seem to be a proof that our lots are shaped for us? Tell him that I was very, very sorry, and that I begged him to forgive me.’

But it is chiefly about Joshua’s mother that she speaks, and wishes that *her* mother had lived. In the midst of the conversation she falls into a light slumber, and opening her eyes half an hour afterwards, resumes from the point where they had left off, as if there had been no interval of silence.

On another occasion they are together on the same spot, and Joshua is telling her of a beautiful part of the river’s bank which she had not seen. ‘The river is narrow there, and even more peaceful than this,’ he says. ‘The trees on both sides bend over the water until the topmost branches almost touch, so that the river is in shade. The sun was peeping through the arch of branches, lighting up the water here and there, and the golden light streaked the white leaves of the lilies, over which the pretty lotus-bird was running with so light a step as not to stir the flowers.’

‘How beautiful!’ she says softly. ‘At night, when the moon is shining on the water and the

lily-leaves through the arch of branches, how grand and peaceful it must be! Joshua, bend your head, my dear. When I am gone, let me be buried there. Nay, don't cry; but promise.'

In a broken voice he promises her, and she is content. Then she bids him bring Opara to her; and the aged chief comes and sits by her side.

'Opara,' she says, taking Joshua's hand and kissing it, 'this my brother and I are one. You understand?'

'I understand,' he answers; and Joshua wonders what it is she is about to say.

'You see how weak I have grown, Opara. Look at my hand; you can see the light through it.'

'Say, my daughter,' asks Opara: 'you who know the language of birds and flowers—you who know the mysteries of the Grand Vault—can you not make yourself strong?'

'No, Opara; I am wanted.'

'Cannot our mintapas make you strong?'

'No, Opara; their skill is not for me. Tell them so; and tell them I thank them, and will not forget them. Listen. Many moons ago, I walked in the woods, where the leaves were singing to each other, and where the wind whispered

strange things as it travelled through the trees. I heard a voice ; I listened ; and I was told that when the next summer came, I should be wanted—There !’

Opara gravely followed the motion of her hand, as it pointed upwards.

‘The summer is coming, and I must go. Do not disturb me then ; my brother will see to me ; and tell your young men and women to let me rest.’

‘I will tell them, and they will obey. Will our daughter return to us ?’

Minnie catches at this question eagerly, and clasps Joshua’s hand with a firmer clasp.

‘I will return, if you will do one thing for me.’

‘Opara will do it.’

‘It will take many days to do.’

‘If it takes many moons to do, it shall be done.’

‘Opara’s name shall be known in the Grand Vault,’ says Minnie in an earnest tone. ‘Take heed of my words. Those men of the same colour as my brother, of which you were told some time ago, you have not seen them ?’

‘No.’

‘They are southward. My brother has a message for them from me. He has promised to deliver it to them; but he does not know the country. If he goes by himself, bad men of other tribes may meet him and take him with them. If you and some of your young men will accompany him south until he sees the strangers, or is near to them, I will return to you by and by, and your tribe shall never want food. The strangers will be kind to you, and will give you good things. Will Opara do this, and protect my brother?’

‘Opara will do this, and will protect your brother.’

‘Good.’ She gives the old chief her hand, and he places it on his eyes, and departs gravely.

Joshua for a time is too agitated to speak. This last proof of her devotion is the crowning sacrifice of her life. She is the first to break the silence.

‘Joshua, my dear, have I made atonement?’

He can only say, ‘O, my dear, my dear, how unworthy I am in my own eyes!’

‘Nay, nay,’ she says soothingly, ‘you are all that is good and noble. A better heart, a purer, never beat. I have committed a great fault, and have done you a great wrong—unconsciously, my

dear, and without thought ; and, by the mercy of our Father, I have been able to atone for it. Think of me as a child, my dear, who has loved you with all her heart, despite her wilfulness. Take me in your arms as you would a child, and say that you forgive me.'

He takes her in his arms, and to satisfy her sobs out the words she wishes to hear. Her face is close to his.

'This kiss for Ellen,' she whispers ; 'this for your dear kind mother ; this for Dan. Tell all of them of my fancy, that I wish to live in their minds, not as a woman, but as a child—as a child who erred through love, and who had not been taught to understand what duty was. Who said this, "There is no earthly sacrifice that love will not sanctify" ?'

'Your father !' he whispers, amazed.

'I heard him ; I was in the room when he blessed my mother for devoting her life to him.'

Presently she asks him to fetch his birds, and he runs and brings them. He opens the cage, and they hop about her contentedly. He gathers some wild flowers, and places them by her side. Shortly afterwards she directs his attention to the

fringed violets, which do not live an hour after they are gathered. 'They are withering,' she says. 'Do not pluck any more of the pretty things; let them live.' He supports her in his arms; and she watches the birds with glistening eyes, and whispers that they remind her of dear Dan. Then she falls asleep, with her face turned to Joshua. He does not disturb her. Everything around is very still and quiet. He thinks of the restless river a few miles away, and of Minnie's words, 'So restless there, so quiet here! It has been so with me.' The afternoon passes; the sun is going down, and the heavens are filled with wondrous colour. Minnie has been asleep for a long while now. Shall he arouse her? Her fair face is perfectly still, and a smile is on her lips. 'Minnie!' he whispers. Her hand is on her heart, and in her hand the shell. She does not speak; and a darkness comes upon him, and his heart grows cold as he presses his lips to hers. She has gone to spend the summer of her life in another world.

Opara holds the last words of Minnie sacred. To the expressed desire of the doctors of the tribe to inter Minnie according to their rites, he says,

‘Our daughter has spoken, and Opara has promised. Her brother will see to her. Let her rest.’ So, on the following night, Joshua is standing alone by Minnie’s grave, which he has strewn with wild flowers. In the rude coffin of bark, which he has cut and made with his own hands, he places also the sweetest-smelling flowers he can find. Her shell he leaves in her hand, and cuts a long tress from her hair. ‘For Dan,’ he murmurs.

He buries her in the place he had described to her, and where she had expressed a wish to be laid. It is just such a night as she pictured. The moon is streaming through the interlaced branches on the beautiful lilies and the peaceful water. He reads prayers from Dan’s Bible, and falls upon his knees; and as he sobs there, the words of her father recur to him, and he repeats their sense prayerfully: ‘She is a wild flower; the impulse of her mind is under the control of the impulse of her heart. She is oblivious of all else, defiant of all else. Those of her friends who have the consciousness of a higher wisdom than she possesses, those of them who can recognise that the promptings of such a heart as hers may possibly lead her into dangerous paths, must guide

her gently, tenderly. If any betray her, he will have to answer for it at the Judgment Seat !'

'Judge me,' he cries aloud, raising his arms to heaven, 'and so deal with me ! This dear angel lies in her grave pure as at her birth. But she will speak for me, dear honoured sister !'

In the distance, standing in the shadow of the trees, are the natives, their bodies streaked with white. They do not intrude upon Joshua's sorrow. Slowly he piles the earth upon the faithful heart, and kisses the earth with passionate grief. When he is calmer, he reads his Bible by the moon's light ; and as he reads, peace comes to him.

CHAPTER XII.

JOSHUA AND THE OLD WIZARD.

For two weeks the natives mourned for Minnie. Their grief was sincere, notwithstanding that it was expressed in barbarous fashion—such as painting their bodies white with pipeclay, and inflicting painful gashes upon their breasts and arms with shells and stones. They observed Joshua gathering wild flowers to place upon her grave, and every day after that, the women and children collected the prettiest and rarest flowers they could find, and decorated Minnie's grave with them. During this time a terrible feeling of desolation came upon Joshua. If Opara failed to keep the promise he had given Minnie, what would become of him? He thought of some words Dan had spoken to him in one of their boyish conversations, when they were talking of Robinson Crusoe. Dan had said he thought it strange that

Robinson did not forget how to speak his native language, and had wondered that he didn't go mad. This remembrance was terrible to Joshua. At night, when he was alone in his hut, he would speak to himself, and would tremble at his voice ; and stopping sometimes with half-uttered words upon his tongue, would be seized with sudden terror as at an unfamiliar sound. But at the end of a fortnight, Opara came to Joshua, and said, ' Our days of mourning are over ; but the image of our daughter will dwell for ever in our hearts. To-night we hold a council. Shall we tarry yet awhile, or shall we prepare to depart ?'

' I have a message for my brothers and hers,' replied Joshua. ' They live southward. Is that the direction Opara will take ?'

' Opara will do as he has promised,' said the old chief with dignity, ' and will accompany you to the south.'

' My sister will be glad if her message is delivered soon ;' and Joshua's heart beat quickly at the prospect of deliverance.

Opara gravely bent his head ; and that night it was decided that twenty young men and doctors of the tribe, including Opara, should start in a couple of days, with Joshua, for the south. When

Joshua was informed of this, he went to Minnie's grave, and shed tears of joy, and gathered a little of the earth, and placed it in the bag round his neck which contained his most precious possessions. On the appointed morning they started early, accompanied by the entire tribe; but by noon all the stragglers had departed. In a few days their road lay through very rough country, where, although fruits and birds were plentiful (it being summer), Opara said they would not be able to live in the winter. Their great difficulty was to obtain water, for the creeks and water-courses were drying up; and Joshua was filled with admiration at the resources of the natives, who found water in places—digging it out of trees, indeed, very often—where a stranger would never have dreamed of searching for it. When Joshua saw them strike their stone weapons into a tree, whence cold bright water flowed, he could not help thinking of Moses striking the rock. A favourite food with them was a species of shrubby plant which they called Karkalla, and which yielded a rich luscious fruit; and they ate, with intense relish, many species of grubs which they cut out of the bark of trees.

Among the party was one famous wizard and

doctor, who was not disposed to look upon Joshua with the same friendly eye as the others did. When Minnie was ill, he had been especially desirous of exercising his arts upon her, and of restoring her to health, by which means his reputation with the tribe would have been enormously increased ; and when Minnie died, he entertained the belief that he could have saved her if he had been allowed. This doctor's name was Nullaboin, and he had joined Joshua's escort because he thought that he might, by watching Joshua's movements, obtain some kind of knowledge that might be useful to him.

During the latter days of Minnie's illness Joshua had not played his accordion, which, it must be borne in mind, the natives had never seen. Joshua had kept it jealously concealed in its covering of fur, and had never played it in sight of the natives. It was at the end of the second week of their journey, when Joshua was looking out anxiously for traces of white settlers, that a circumstance occurred which boded him great danger. He had wandered, as he had been in the habit of doing every night, a long distance from where the natives pitched their camp. From time to time Opara and his party had met natives of different

tribes, with whom they had conversed (though sometimes with difficulty, for their dialects differed) concerning the white men; and on this morning a strange native had given them such information as led Opara to tell Joshua that he believed he would soon be able to deliver Minnie's message to her brothers. Interpreting by this that the stranger they had met had seen something of Englishmen, Joshua, in the night, wandered farther from the camp than usual, in the vague hope that he might come upon traces of his countrymen. He saw none, and yet thought they might be near. An idea struck him. 'Why should I not play my accordion?' he thought. 'I might be within a short distance of my deliverers, and not know it. The sound of civilised music might reach their ears, and they would come to me.' He acted upon the thought without delay. For the first time for many weeks, he took his accordion from its covering (it was slung round his shoulders by a strap of dried skin), and walked through the woods, playing, and swinging the instrument in the air, so that the sound should travel far. He little dreamed of the effect he produced. Nullaboin was tracking him—had tracked him every night in his wanderings. Hitherto Nul-

laboin had learned nothing ; but now, directly the music struck upon his ears, he was so amazed as almost to betray himself. The idea that flashed through that cunning savage mind was as singular as it was original. It was neither more nor less than that Joshua held Minnie's spirit imprisoned in the strange instrument from which the melodious sounds proceeded. They were the same as used to proceed from Minnie's hut, when it was imagined she was speaking with invisible shapes. What wonders might he not perform, could he obtain possession of that power ! The mysterious spirits of air and heaven would speak to him, and would tell him strange things. But how could he obtain it—how ? Joshua was strong—too strong for him. He was an old man——ay, he was an old man, and these spirits, if he could speak to them in their language, might teach him how to become young again. The courses of his blood quickened through the old wizard's veins at the wild hope, and he picked up a stone and cut at his breast in his excitement. He could not hope to wrest the magic power from Joshua singly. He must enlist his companions on his side. His influence was great, but Opara's was greater. He dreaded that aged chief. 'If Opara knows,' was his

cunning thought, 'Opara will claim it for himself. No, no; it is mine, Nullaboin's. Hear me, Pulyalanna! Strike Opara with your thunder to-night! Strike him dead! He has lived long enough.' But as he thought, he started away in terror. Among the trees, some twenty yards away, he saw a crouching figure, which he took to be one of the fabulous Purkabidnies, that roam through the woods at night to slay black men. It was but the charred stump of a tree, but it was sufficient to cause Nullaboin, the wizard, to fly from the spot in direst terror, towards the camp. He lay awake until Joshua returned, and noted with his lynx eyes that Joshua wore the magic instrument strapped round his shoulders. The following day he took occasion to speak to Joshua in a subtle manner, as thus: 'Nullaboin dreamt last night of his daughter the Star.'

Joshua nodded.

'She spoke to me. Her voice was like the voice of the birds. I shall see her soon.'

Joshua gave him a startled look.

'Has her brother seen her?'

'No.'

'Has she not spoken to him?'

'No.'

‘Nullaboin is a great mintapa, and his daughter knows his power.’

All this was Greek to Joshua, and he did not encourage the old wizard to continue his revelations. But during that day and the next, Nullaboin was busy working upon the credulous minds of the younger natives, and found but little difficulty in inflaming their curiosity. Joshua’s eagerness had become almost painful by this time; and when they were travelling over plains, every speck on the horizon became a horseman in his anxious eyes. Occasionally they had to make their way through dense scrub, where there were but few trees; but for the most part their road lay through the woods, where tall timber was abundant. Under any other circumstances, Joshua would have found the life he was leading wonderfully interesting, fatiguing as it was. Now they were wending their way through a gully, the heights on each side of which were so thickly wooded as almost to shut out the light of heaven; now they were on a plain somewhat thinly dotted with trees, when suddenly a young savage would dart off in pursuit of a bee which his wonderful sight had detected fifty feet high in the air. Away buzzed the bee through the clear air, and,

with his eyes fixed upon the tiny insect, after it flew the savage, joined by other young men of the party, the older men following more leisurely. With unerring sight the hunters ran until the bee settled upon a tree ; and with wondrous speed the bee-hunter, seeing the sugar-bags in the topmost branches, climbed the trunk, cutting notches in the bark for his toes with his stone hatchet, until he reached the sweet store, with which he loaded himself, and then rejoined his companions. Now they caught an enormous guana, more than five feet in length, upon which the natives feasted ; and saw strange specimens of the mantis, which looked like rotten pieces of dead twigs until they were touched, when they crawled away by the aid of their abundant mis-shapen limbs. Now they came to a place where, surrounded by almost impenetrable scrub, in which patches of wild bananas grew, were a number of fresh-water lagoons, filled with reeds and weeds of every description, and abounding in screeching cockatoos and beautifully-coloured ducks.

While Nullaboin was busy with his scheme for obtaining the magic box in which he imagined Minnie's spirit was imprisoned, some members of a strange tribe came to the party, one of

whom, to Joshua's amazement, was singing in imperfect English a verse of the ballad, 'He promised to buy me a bunch of blue ribbons.'* The singer knew no other words of English; but he contrived to make Joshua understand that he had been among white men, which, indeed, was sufficiently evident from his singing.

'Opara,' said Joshua with sparkling eyes, 'my brothers are near.'

'It is well,' was Opara's simple reply. 'Opara will have performed his promise. When his daughter returns to her tribe, she will thank Opara.'

But by this time Nullaboin's plans were matured; and that night, when Joshua wandered into the woods, his heart filled with grateful feelings towards the faithful savages, he was followed stealthily by Nullaboin, and half-a-dozen braves who had joined in his plot.

'At last!' thought Joshua, visions of happiness to come floating before his eyes—'at last! Perhaps to-morrow I shall see the faces of my countrymen, and then, and then——' But he could not think clearly; for as the images of those dearest to him came before him, the false face of Solomon Fewster seemed to cast a shadow

* A fact.

upon his happiness. He leaned against a silver-leaved gum-tree, and tried to calm himself, and in a little while succeeded. Ellen was true to him, he was sure. And Dan? 'Is he training his birds still?' he thought. 'How has he borne his great grief?' He saw before him the dear old kitchen in Stepney, exactly as he had seen it last; every chair and every piece of crockery was in its exact place. Every detail of those last few minutes at home presented itself clearly to him: his yearning look at the old familiar room; his walking up the stairs to the street-door with his face hidden in his mother's neck, and she caressing him, as she had done when he was a little child. Almost unconsciously he had taken out his accordion, and his fingers were wandering over the keys, playing softly those airs most in consonance with his thoughts. He even murmured the words of 'Tom Bowling:'

'Here a sheer hulk lies poor Tom Bowling,
The darling of our crew.'

'Dear Old Sailor! How glad I shall be to see his honest face!' And he saw the Old Sailor take a Wedding-Ring out of a piece of silver paper, with a triumphant expression upon his face, as he had

done in that memorable interview in Gravesend, when——whiz! Good God! what was this? The sky seemed to come down upon the earth, and he sank through it—down! down!——

Nullaboin, snatching the accordion from the falling man, hugged it to his naked breast, and glided swiftly away, followed by his confederates. They must have traversed full four miles before they paused, and then they looked cautiously around, to assure themselves that they were alone. The old wizard had kept the instrument tightly pressed to his bosom during the flight, so that no sound had proceeded from it; but now, when they paused, his grasp relaxed. His hand was on the keys; and as the accordion gradually distended itself, a slow wail issued from it, which so terrified him that he let it fall to the ground, so that the weak and plaintive sound was followed by a harsh and sudden jangle of all the notes. Appalled at this angry cry, which was to them full of fearful meaning, the younger savages, with palpitating hearts and dismayed faces, flew from the spot, and left Nullaboin alone with the terrible prize. He stood like a statue for many minutes, although the thick beads of perspiration

were rolling down his face and beard, and then cautiously approached the prostrate mystery. Encouraged by its silence, he stooped over it, and, after his savage fashion, entreated it to speak to him. No answer came. What should he do? A sudden light came into his eyes. Minnie's spirit was imprisoned there, and she was angry. He would release her. He lifted the accordion gently from the ground, and timidly pressed his finger upon one of the higher keys. The response was gentle, almost piteous; it was an appeal to him.

‘O, Star of the tribe!’ he whispered, ‘Nullaboin will set you free. Make him great!’

He took a small green-stone mogo (hatchet) from his girdle, and carefully cut a long hole in the cloth. He held his hand over it to grasp the spirit; but he saw nothing, heard nothing. He waited; nothing came. He took it in his hand, and waved it up and down; no sound issued from it. The spirit had fled, and the old wizard was left despairing.

Joshua felt no pain. A delicious sense of rest was upon him. Of all the memories that came to him in his dreams, the happy holiday he had

spent with Dan and Ellen on the Old Sailor's barge was the most vivid. He lived once more through the whole of that happy day—stood in Dan's room in his holiday clothes, with food for the birds which were to be presented to the Old Sailor—went down to breakfast, and saw Ellen's yearning look as they talked of the coming pleasures of the day—saw her run out of the room and run in again, almost mad with delight because Susan had obtained permission for her to accompany the lads—rode in the creaking cart through dingy Whitechapel—saw Dan swinging in the hammock and gazing at him affectionately while he was rowing—heard every word of the Old Sailor's sea-stories over again—sat on the deck in the twilight in a state of delicious happiness by Ellen's side, and went down into the saloon, and heard the Old Sailor sing, and then Ellen her favourite song of 'Bread-and-cheese and Kisses.' After that a darkness came upon him, and he opened his eyes, and saw the stars shining in the heavens; but they were shut out immediately afterwards, and he was standing on the deck of the Merry Andrew the night the ship struck on the rocks, holding Minnie in his arms; the dead faces of his shipmates crowded upon him,

rising from the cruel sea with the exact expression upon their features that they wore when he last saw them; then came his encounter with the Lascar in the woods; and that memory brought to him the face of Solomon Fewster, which lingered long; but it faded in its turn, and gave way to other fancies, the most enduring of which was the river near which Minnie was buried, and the refrain of her words, 'So restless there, so quiet here!' dwelt in his mind through the long night.

When he awoke, it was daylight. He struggled to his feet, but could scarcely stand for weakness. He had been struck by a boomerang on the temple, and had lost a great deal of blood. He was so weak and bewildered that, even now that he was awake, the past incidents of his life were strangely mingled in his mind. It was not until after long mental pondering and sifting of incidents that the true knowledge of his position and of what had occurred to him dawned upon his senses. He looked round for his accordion; it was gone. Then he thought, 'Opara has betrayed me at the last moment. They have stolen my accordion, and they have left me here for dead. But they may return at any moment to strip me of what I have about me.' Weak and

faint as he was, he crawled cautiously towards the most thickly-wooded part of the forest, and there concealed himself. 'What now?' he thought. 'Must I wait for death?' For indeed he was too weak to walk. His heart almost fainted within him.

'Now, when I was so near to deliverance,' he groaned aloud, shedding bitter tears, 'to be thus dashed back to misery!' But even as he uttered the words, he heard the crack of a stockman's whip. Crack! It rang through the woods and through his heart. Not the mockery of the whip-bird this time! No, no; it was too near; and it was followed by the sound of horses' hoofs and by the sound of English voices. Thank God! thank God!

CHAPTER XIII.

FAITHFUL HEARTS.

ON a pleasant summer evening Dan and Ellen and George Marvel were sitting in the shade of the verandah which surrounded three sides of their house. The house was built of wood, and was all on one floor, and there was a garden in the front and in the rear. George Marvel was smoking his pipe as usual, and having by this time got used to the short clays, which were the only ones he could now obtain, had just declared that he enjoyed a short pipe as well as a long one; ‘though I couldn’t stomach them at first, Dan, as you know.’ Dan nodded in acquiescence; he had no time to reply; for at that moment a great shouting was heard, and the mail-cart was seen driving round the corner towards them. The arrival of the mail-cart in the village was an event of the utmost importance, and was always greeted with cheers by the excited population.

There was a mail-service once a fortnight, and sometimes it would be a day or two behind, which was most serviceable to the inhabitants of the village, as giving them something to be anxious about and to talk about. The driver (who was contractor for the mail, owner of the mail-cart, and driver of it, all in one) had one invariable excuse when he was late : he had been waiting for the birds. Now, when Dan first heard this, he, without knowing its meaning, felt instantly attracted to the driver of the mail, whose name was Ramsay ; and when he had an explanation from the lips of a neighbour to whom Ramsay had given a lift (he was always giving kindly ‘ lifts ’ to one and another), Dan was disposed to be affectionately familiar with him. This feeling being reciprocated by Ramsay, an intimacy sprung up between them, the consequence of which was, that Ramsay, after delivering his mails to the postmaster (a rheumatic old woman, deaf, and almost blind), came as regularly as a clock to have a smoke and a chat with Dan and the Marvels. A curious character was Ramsay ; a man who had seen better days—who had, indeed, once been very wealthy—who had been plundered and deceived from his youth upwards—and who yet retained

a kindliness to every living thing with which he came in contact. Thus, his waiting for the birds: it was whimsical, pretty-childish, some said; consisting in stopping whichever of his two steady old mares he was driving, immediately he saw a bird on the bush track before him. 'Get out of my way, little bird,' he would say in a singularly gentle voice, and he would give his whip a flick at the back of his cart, which had not the slightest effect in disturbing the little creature that blocked the road. But Ramsay could no more drive past it than he could drive through a wire fence; and he often found it necessary to descend from his cart, and walk softly towards the bird, which, having probably by that time finished its pecking, would jerk up its cunning head towards the intruder, and leisurely take flight to the nearest tree, where it would watch the lazy old mare trotting along, and would receive perhaps a comical 'Good-morning, little bird!' from the gentle-hearted mail-contractor.

When Ramsay had delivered his mail to the rheumatic old female postmaster, he would look over the letters and newspapers (five minutes was long enough to sort the lot of them) to see whether there was anything for Dan and Mr. Marvel.

On this evening there was a newspaper; and Ramsay, taking possession of it, walked leisurely to the house of his friends. Ellen's child, Maggie, saw him, and ran to him for a jump in the air, and he stopped to indulge her until he was out of breath, when he was glad to deliver her into her mother's charge, shaking his head laughingly in answer to her cries for 'more!'

'Hi, Mrs. Wattles!' he shouted to a woman who was passing. 'There's a letter for you at the post-office.' Which sent Mrs. Wattles off, in eager haste, to receive her missive.

'You're a day late,' said Dan, as Ramsay opened the gate.

'Waiting for the birds, Dan; couldn't get along for the creatures. Here's a newspaper for you.'

The newspaper had an English postage-stamp upon it, and there was something marked inside.

'It's from the Old Sailor!' cried Dan, and pressed it to his lips, and so did Ellen, and all those simple foolish people, in turns, one after another. The paragraph that was marked related how a ship, with all hands, was reported lost ten years ago, and there was nothing more heard of

her until a week before the newspaper was printed, when into the London Docks came a vessel from China, which had been driven out of her course, luckily, and had in consequence picked up six men off an island, who had been living there for many years; and how that these men belonged to the crew who were supposed to have gone to the bottom ten years before. You may imagine that they read this paragraph half-a-dozen times at the least, having Joshua in their minds all the time, and that Ellen and Mrs. Marvel disappeared for a few minutes to have a cry together. While they were away, the men sat silent and grave, Dan reading the newspaper, and George Marvel and Ramsay smoking their pipes.

Now, once in every month—that is, by every other mail—Ramsay had to deliver a mail-bag at a cattle station known as Bull's Run. The station was between forty and fifty miles distant from the village, and Ramsay took two days for the journey, out of a merciful regard for his old mare. As he had to start for Bull's Run early in the morning, he did not stay late with his friends, but bade them good-night at about nine o'clock. When he was gone, the Old Sailor became the subject of conversation, and every circumstance

of their intimacy was recalled and dwelt upon with loving affection. Every night they sat together—Susan as well, although she never joined in the conversation—talking of one thing and another. Time had softened their grief, but it had not made them less constant; their hearts beat as fondly and devotedly for Joshua as ever they had done.

Susan and Mr. and Mrs. Marvel had gone to bed; Ellen and Dan were alone. Between these two an undefinable sympathy existed; they could almost read each other's thoughts; and this night Ellen lingered when the others had retired to rest, because she had read in Dan's face the signs of something more than usually important in his mind. For a long time they were silent; the stillness of everything around impressed them deeply. The nature of their thoughts, and the stillness of the night, in which there was something solemn, brought to both of them the memory of another night, years ago, when they had sat alone, as they were sitting now, with Basil Kindred's unopened diary before them.

‘Ellen,’ said Dan, playing with her fingers thoughtfully, ‘I have dreamt of Jo lately more often than usual, and to-night my thoughts dwell

upon him so strongly that I shall not go to bed for a while.'

'I will sit up with you, my dear.'

The windows in the room were folding windows, and reached to the ground. Ellen opened them; and she and Dan were presently sitting beneath the verandah, he upon a chair, she upon the ground, with her head resting in his lap.

'Do you remember that Christmas night, Ellen, when Jo came home?'

'Yes, Dan.'

'And the strange impression I had upon me that Jo was near us, although I had no actual knowledge of it?'

'Yes.'

'I can see the street, as we saw it then, Ellen, with its covering of snow, and that cruel black gash in it which the only man who passed tore with his feet. It was like an ill-omen. You see nothing to disturb the beauty of the scene, Ellen?'

'No; but why do you ask, my dear?'

'Because I have upon me to-night the same feeling that I had then; because, notwithstanding that it is almost madness to say it and believe it, I believe that Jo is near us.'

‘ Dan !’

‘ To no one else but you would I say this, my dear. Long dwelling upon one subject fills the mind with singular thought concerning it, and it may be that this feeling that is upon me now is but the creation of the wildest fancy. Yet there are strange influences within us and around us for which we cannot account, and which affect us in mysterious ways. When I first knew that it was Jo’s wish to be a sailor, and that we should be parted, I tried with all my mind and soul—it may be that it was a foolish childish fancy, Ellen, but I had it—to create such a heart sympathy between us that we could never be parted in spirit. I had some wild ideas then of being able to dream of what he was doing and seeing when he was thousands of miles away from our little room in Stepney. Of course they came to nothing; but it would be strange indeed, if this earnest striving of mine had not produced some feeling within me which time only can test. You remember what poor Minnie’s father used to say, “ There are more things in heaven and earth than is dreamt of in our philosophy.” ’

So they sat together talking and musing, and it was past midnight before they retired to rest.

Early in the morning, the whimsical mail-contractor was jogging along towards Bull's Run ; he had to stop so many times for the little birds in the road, that his progress was slow ; but he had reckoned upon these impediments, and he arrived at the station not more than a couple of hours after the usual time. That was the end of his journey ; the following day he had to make his way back to Dan's village. The residence of the owner of Bull's Run station was built of slabs split from the bloodwood-tree ; the roof was of shingle ; and the interior of the house was lined with rich dark-red cedar, which gave it quite a cosy comfortable appearance. The workmen's huts were built of palm-tree slabs, and the roofs were thatched with strong sword-grass, which grew in great profusion on the banks of a river within a few miles of the homestead. Ramsay was always welcomed at Bull's Run ; the men and women on the station—for, primitive as it was, there were women and children living on it—used to cluster round him, and ask him for news from the villages through which he passed, and the smallest items were received with thankfulness, and eagerly listened to. On this occasion, Ramsay had but little news to tell, and his budget was

soon exhausted. In return, they told him theirs : one of the bulls had torn a man's arm open ; a child had been lost for a whole night, and all the men were out searching for it miles away, and it was found the next morning within half a mile of the hut ; three bushrangers, splendidly mounted, passed the station last week at full gallop ; one of the shepherds had come in with a cock-and-a-bull story of gold being found somewhere or other ; another shepherd had gone mad ; Yellow-hammer Jack and his wife had had a row ; and—but O, this was the best bit of the lot !—a man had been brought in by two stockmen who were looking for lost cattle, and who had found him instead ; he was almost dead, and had been living a long time with the Blacks. He seemed a decent kind of fellow, had been a sailor, he said, but was strangely silent about himself—for good reasons, some of the ill-natured ones said. Anyways, the man was better, although still very weak, and intended to start the next morning for Sydney ; nothing would stop him.

‘ A long tramp for a weak man,’ said kind-hearted Ramsay ; ‘ if he's a decent fellow, I'll give him a lift.’

As he said this, there came towards the group,

walking very slowly, a strange-looking man, with a beard down to his breast, dressed in skins and furs; he had a stick in his hand, and seemed to require its support. They pointed to him, and said that was the man. Ramsay looked at him keenly, and the air of melancholy that rested in the man's eyes impressed the mail-contractor with a feeling of pity.

'A sailor, eh?' he thought; 'and living with the savages. Wonder what he lived with them for?' Then he thought of Dan's and Ellen's anxiety concerning strange sailors and castaways, and that perhaps they would be glad to see this man. He said nothing, however, but was up the next morning early, and saw the man start on his road with slow and painful steps. A few minutes afterwards, the old mare was harnessed, and its tail was turned to Bull's Run. Soon he came up to the man, and as he did so, two purple-breasted robins peeking at a bit of honeysuckle barred his progress. 'Get out of my way, little birds,' said the mail-driver, pulling up his mare; and he gave a soft flick with his whip in a direction where the robins were not. The words reached the man's ears, and he turned his head in surprise, and saw the little comedy. A gentle sweet smile rested on

his lips, and he looked at the mail-driver almost gratefully. Ramsay smiled in return, and again bade the little robins get out of his way; and presently they took flight, each with a tiny piece of the sweet flower in its beak. Then the old mare jogged lazily along, and the strange-looking man gazed wistfully after the cart. Ramsay, looking back, saw the wistful expression, and stopped at once. 'Hi, mate!'

Joshua came slowly forward.

'Where are you bound for?'

'Sydney.'

'Going to walk all the way?'

'If I can,' sighed Joshua; and could not help adding, 'and if I don't die on the road!'

'Jump up, mate; I can give you a lift for forty miles.'

'I have no money,' and Joshua turned away, with a sob.

'I don't want your money, I want your company. But how were you going to live, if you've no money?'

'I should trust to the Providence that has so wonderfully delivered me,' thought Joshua, but made no reply aloud; though it could be seen in his eyes, which were filled with tears.

‘Jump in,’ said Ramsay, imperatively and kindly, ‘without another word.’

And without another word Joshua climbed into the cart.

‘I daresay now,’ said Ramsay in the course of conversation, as the old mare trotted steadily on the road, ‘that you wonder what made me so anxious for your company. Well, I’ll tell you. In the village where I shall put up to-morrow afternoon, and which is forty odd miles on the road to Sydney, live some people I’m very fond of, who had a sailor friend that they’ve not heard of for a long while.’

‘Ah!’ sighed Joshua; ‘I know what their feelings must be. Did they love him?’

‘Love him! Well, you shall see for yourself; if, in return for the lift I am giving you, you won’t mind talking to them a bit.’

‘I shall be glad to; it may remind me of my own friends.’

‘Where are your friends?—Now, Dozy!’ this to the old mare, who had stopped suddenly short; ‘what d’ye stop for? The sense of the creature!’ he added proudly, pointing to a bird some yards in front of them. ‘Get out of my way, little bird!’

‘When I first heard you say that,’ said Joshua,
‘I was sure you had a kind heart.’

‘Fond of birds yourself, mate?’

‘Very, very fond. The tenderest remembrances
of my life are connected with them.’

Ramsay cast a sharp glance at the half-savage.

‘Been long among the Blacks, mate? or isn’t
the story true?’

‘It’s true enough. Long among them? Ay—
years; but I don’t know how long.’

Joshua, indeed, had lost count of time.

‘From choice?’

‘No; but I’ve told my story to no one yet.
It would scarcely be believed. But tell me about
your friends and the sailor.’

‘There’s a mother there, that lost a son when
she lost her sailor’—Joshua pressed his fingers to
his face, and sobbed convulsively at the thought
of his own dear mother, who had lost a son when
she lost her sailor; and the mail-driver felt a
choking in his throat, and had to wait a few
moments before he could proceed. ‘And a father
that lost a son at the same time. And a wife
that lost a husband. And a friend that lost a
friend. And a little child that can hardly be

said to have lost a father, for she never saw her father's face.'

'Merciful God!'

'What's the matter, mate?'

For Joshua was trembling—like a child; and great sobs came from his chest—like a man.

'You remind me—you remind me,' sobbed Joshua. 'Don't think me unmanly; don't think me mad. I have been sorely, sorely tried!'

Whereat Ramsay stopped the mare, and got out of the cart, and went into the bush to look for birds. He must have had a great difficulty in finding them, he was away so long; and the old mare stood perfectly still and contented the while, twitching her tail to knock off the flies, which was the only spirited action she was ever known to be guilty of. When they were jogging along again, they did not speak a word for a full hour, and then it was Joshua who spoke first, taking up the thread where it had been dropped.

'The child who has never seen her father—a girl, then?'

'Yes, mate.'

'How was it that she had never seen him?'

'Married her mother; went away to sea, and never heard of since.'

‘How old is the child?’

‘Five years, I should say.’

‘If you knew,’ said Joshua in a slow trembling voice, ‘what a chord you have touched in my heart, you would pity me. Forgive me for my strange manner, and answer me. The mother who has lost a son; describe her.’

‘An angel. I’m not good at picking faces to pieces; but when I look at her, she reminds me of my own mother, dead and gone this many a year. Never thinks of herself; always putting herself out for other people—bless her old face! And yet she’s not so old, although her hair is nearly white—that’s from grief.’

‘The father who lost a son?’

‘A fine fellow; a little self-willed and obstinate; a wood-turner.’

A long, long silence. The mail-driver did not break it, nor did he intrude upon his companion’s thoughts. ‘Twit-twit-twit!’ came from the throats of some diamond sparrows, which were flitting among the gum-tree branches, and a flock of scarlet lowry parrots floated through the bush that lined the road on either side, their wonderfully gorgeous plumage lighting up the dark trees with brilliant light.

‘The wife that lost a husband, and the friend that lost a friend?’

‘Treasures both ; brother and sister.’

‘One other question—where do they come from?’

‘London. I don’t know what part.’

A mist floated before Joshua’s eyes, and he remained like one in a dream during the afternoon—wondering, hoping, fearing. When they were near to the village the following afternoon, Joshua said :

‘It may be that you have rendered me one of the greatest services that a man can possibly render another. If it be as I scarcely dare to hope, we shall know each other for long after this. Complete the service by doing one little thing more. Drive past the house where your friends live and point it out to me, so that I may descend and walk to it alone when we are at the end of your journey.’

Ramsay nodded. It was about five o’clock when the mail-cart rattled into the village. The contractor for the mails always made a great clatter when he came in, as if he had been driving for his life—a fiction which, although no one believed in, he thought it desirable to keep up. ‘It looks Government-like,’ he said.

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Solomon Fewster is in the garden at the rear of the house, pleading his suit to Ellen for the twentieth time. She stands silent until he has finished a rhapsody, in which love and money are strangely commingled.

‘Think of the time I have waited, Ellen,’ he says; ‘think of the constancy of my affection, and of the position I can offer you. I am making money fast, and only wait for you to say Yes to buy a house for us, which in three years will be worth three times what they ask for it. What is the use of your wasting your life in this out-of-the-way village when all the attractions of a city life are open to you? Come now, give me your hand, and reward the man who has been your constant friend and lover, and who can make you rich.’

But Ellen is insensible to the splendour of the offer; indeed, she is weary of it and him, and she tells him so spiritedly, and yet cannot repulse him. At length she says:

‘Mr. Fewster, there must be an end of this. I shall never, never marry again; and even if I did,’ she adds, to put a stop to what has become persecution, ‘I should not choose you;’ and leaves him with this arrow in his heart.

He stands amazed. Not choose him ! Why, a thousand girls would jump at him. Not here perhaps, for womankind was a scarce commodity ; but at home, or anywhere where girls were more plentiful. Not choose him ! He follows her into the house, wounded and mortified, and into Dan's room, where Mr. Marvel and Dan are at work. Mr. Marvel has all his tools, and does a great deal of wood-turning—having, indeed, more than he can do—and is putting by money. He scarcely looks up as Solomon Fewster walks in, somewhat defiantly ; and as no one speaks to him, an awkward silence ensues upon his entrance ; broken by Mr. Marvel, who, noticing Ellen's flushed face, observes,

‘ Been teasing Ellen again, Mr. Fewster ? ’

‘ Teasing her, indeed ! ’ exclaims Solomon Fewster loftily ; ‘ honouring her, I should say. ’

The flush upon Ellen's face deepens at this, and she casts such a look of aversion at Mr. Fewster that all the blood rushes into *his* face, and he says some injudicious words about ingratitude, and about what one might expect if one condescended to lower himself as he had done.

Upon this George Marvel starts to his feet in a great heat, and exclaims,

‘ What do you mean by ingratitude, and by

lowering yourself, Mr. Fewster? What gratitude do we owe you?’

‘Ask Dan,’ says Mr. Fewster,—‘ask Dan who it was bought his birds to keep you when you were starving, and when no one else would look upon you. But it serves me right for noticing you and helping you, instead of treating you as all your neighbours did. I ought to have known what return I might expect.’

‘And I daresay you got your return,’ says George Marvel, ‘when you sold Dan’s birds at a good profit. As for Dan selling his birds to keep us from starving, that was no business of yours, so long as you got value for your money. That is a matter between Dan and me; and Dan’s satisfied with the way that account stands, or I’m mistaken in him.’ Dan presses George Marvel’s hand. ‘Thank you, Dan.—Now, as to lowering yourself, Mr. Fewster, Do you mean to tell me that you would be lowering yourself if Ellen here was free to marry you, and would accept you? You mean-spirited dog! I’m a good deal older than you are; but if you were not in my house, I would thrash you for speaking as you have done, as I’ve thrashed others in Stepney when they let loose their lying tongues at us. Get out of the

place, and never set foot in it again !' Attracted by the loud voices, Susan and Mrs. Marvel, with Ellen's child, have come into the room ; and Mrs. Marvel now goes to her husband's side and lays her hand upon his arm. 'Nay, Maggie—let be ; I'm not going to hurt him ; I wouldn't lay a finger upon him here ; and I don't want to anywhere else ; only, don't let him cross me if he says a word against us out of this house.—Dan !' he cries, 'do you want to see Mr. Fewster here again ?'

'No, sir ; I think it will be best if Mr. Fewster will keep away from us.'

'And you, Ellen ? what do you say ?'

'I never wish to see him again. For the sake of what is past, I would have been content to see him, if he would have ceased from persecuting me ; but after what he has said to you, I hope he will leave us in peace.'

'You hear,' exclaims George Marvel ; 'we are happy enough without you. Go ; and never darken this door again !'

Solomon Fewster looks round, almost savagely ; his face is white with passion, and all the vindictiveness of his bad nature comes into play.

'You are happy enough without me !' he sneers,

with his knuckles to his mouth. ‘Don’t make too sure of that. I have been your friend hitherto. What if I now make myself your enemy? What if, when I go from this house, I spread about *my* version of your reason for leaving London? What if I tell your neighbours here of the real character of your sailor-hero, and how, because of his villany, all your friends turned their backs upon you——’

But he has no time to say more; for the door, which has been partly open, swings on its hinges, and Joshua enters.

Not one of them recognises him. In his strange garb, with his fur-cap pulled over his eyes, and with his face covered with hair, no trace of Joshua is discernible; and yet they look at him spell-bound, waiting for him to speak. He gazes at the forms of all the dear ones, and grasps the back of a chair to steady himself. He takes them all in at a glance, and sees in one brief moment the changes in them that time has made. His mother’s white hair; the deepened wrinkles in his father’s face; Ellen more matronly than she was, but fair and pleasant to look at as when she was a girl; Susan, like an old woman; Dan grown a little stouter, and with the same dear boyish light in his eyes and on his face——but the child,

clinging to Ellen's apron and looking at him wonderingly with Ellen's eyes and his!——

He had thought, before he entered, that he would be strong, but he has no more control over himself for a few moments than a straw in a fierce wind. Then muttering, 'Justice first!' he turns upon Solomon Fewster a glance of hate and scorn, and grasps him by the shoulder with so powerful a grasp, that Fewster writhes with pain.

'I heard your last words,' he says.

But directly he speaks, a thrill runs through them, and they are running towards him with outstretched arms, when he cries,

'Stand off! By what strange chance I find you, I can scarcely imagine. But do not come nearer to me for a little while, or I shall fall dead at your feet!'

Awe-struck and trembling they obey him.

'I would not touch one of your dear hands till you have heard me and judged me, though death were the penalty for depriving myself of the joy! I would not receive one kiss from your honoured lips upon my cheek till you have heard me and judged me, though I were sure that my tongue would be paralysed in the utterance of what I have to say! Some part of your

sufferings, some part of your pain, I know from my own suffering and pain, and I will clear myself before your eyes, so help me Thou! or go for ever from your sight!

Susan is running to him with cries of 'Justice! justice!' and is about to throw herself upon him, when George Marvel's arm restrains and keeps her back. 'Be still, madwoman!' he mutters sternly, and stands by her side, watchful of her, and no less watchful and attentive of every word that falls from his son's lips.

Joshua takes the cap from his head, and lets it fall to the ground, still keeping his strong grasp upon Solomon Fewster, whose cowardly blood grows thin as he writhes and listens.

'Justice!' echoes Joshua. 'You shall have it, and so shall this base dog, whose presence pollutes the air I breathe. Listen well. Of another matter that we must speak of presently, and which is near and dear to all our hearts, I will say nothing before him. But in the *Merry Andrew* in which I sailed from Gravesend, and which is now at the bottom of the sea, with many dear brave souls that were aboard her, was a villanous sailor—a Lascar, from whose hands I once rescued the woman who calls for justice,

and who struck me down on that dreadful Christmas-eve when I first came home from sea. He shrinks and trembles beneath my grasp, this false friend, of whose bad heart I warned my brother Dan before the *Merry Andrew* sailed. At one time during the voyage, when we were in danger, there was an attempt at mutiny, and this Lascar was one of the cowardly wretches who endeavoured to spread dissatisfaction. When we were in dread peril, this Lascar sailor and a mutinous mate, whom we had to put in irons, strove hard to injure me and the Captain—heaven rest his soul!—and, happily, failed. The ship was wrecked, and we had to abandon her, and take to a raft which we had made; and on that raft we suffered for more than six weeks hunger and thirst, and every species of misery. Out of the entire crew and passengers only seven were saved, among them being myself and this Lascar sailor and his confederate, the mutinous mate. Before the Captain died, he appointed me to succeed in the command, and I have the record from the log-book about me now. We got ashore. How we lived, you shall hear from me by and by; but once the Lascar (whom we suspected of having killed his confederate) stole upon me,

and but that I turned my head in time, I should not be here now to expose the villany of this cowardly wretch. Foiled in his devilish design, he told me then that he had been set to trap me, and was paid for it. Some time after that, I found the Lascar dead in the forest; and before I buried him—not wishing to leave a human creature, however vile, to be eaten by birds and beasts—I obtained evidence which proved to me that the wretch who writhes now within my grasp was the master who paid him to ruin, and perhaps to murder me.'

'A clever lie,' Solomon Fewster manages to say, though he is shaking from terror.

'A lie! I have the proofs. Be thankful that I have met you here, among those who are all that the world holds dear for me. If I had met you in the forest, in the midst of such scenes as I have witnessed lately, I would not have answered for your life.'

Joshua hurls Solomon Fewster from him with such force that he falls, almost stunned, in the corner of the room. Then Joshua takes from his neck the bag containing his relics, and selects from them the silver watch and the document which Fewster had given the Lascar,

and after reading aloud the document and the inscription on the watch, lays them upon the table.

‘Here are the proofs of your crime and your villany,’ he says to Fewster. ‘Be thankful if you are allowed to escape punishment. Go, and go quickly, and without a word!’ He stands aside to let the man pass; and Solomon Fewster, without a word or a look to any one there, passes out of the room, and out of the village. And is never seen in it again.

When they are alone, Joshua turns to Susan, and, in a softer voice, says,

‘Susan, you cried for justice. Upon me!’

‘Yes, upon you. Where is Minnie? What have you done with Minnie?’

The big tears roll down Joshua’s beard at the mention of her name.

‘You think I took her away?’

‘You know you did.’

‘Then truly, if all of you believe as Susan believes, my life is darker than the darkest night.’ With upraised hand he checks them from speaking; but he sees in their faces what gives him precious comfort. ‘When I went away from Gravesend,’ he says in a soft and gentle voice, ‘I had no knowledge that Minnie was aboard.’

When we got to Sydney I did not know it. My duties occupied all my time. We sailed from Sydney, and I was still in ignorance. But on the night the *Merry Andrew* struck on the rocks I heard her voice for the first time. I suppose she thought that we were lost, and in her agony she made herself known to me ; but I did not see her—the night was too dark. When I saw her the next day, I saw to my amazement that she had stained her face, and that her hair was not so long as she used to wear it. We were together on the raft. We were together on the shore. She was one of the seven who were saved. We lived together like brother and sister. When the savages discovered us, they had a strange fancy respecting her, and she obtained great influence over them. She used all her influence to protect me, and but for her I should have lived and died where the tribe we fell amongst chiefly wandered—in the north, many hundreds of miles from here.’ He takes from his bag Ellen’s portrait, the lock of her hair he had cut before he left Gravesend, and Dan’s Bible. He places these on one side. ‘What is left, Dan, is yours. This tress, cut not many weeks ago ; this paper, which she desired me to give you, and which I have never read ; this earth,

which I gathered from her grave! Before she died, she sent you all her dearest love, and a kiss for mother, Dan, and Ellen. She died pure as she had lived, dear, faithful, mistaken heart! As I hope for redemption, I speak the truth. If you believe me, take me to your hearts again, and let me live in them as I know I once lived!

As he once lived! as he had always lived! They cluster round him, and kiss him, and sob over him. Had he not been saved from the deep — ay, and from greater perils — to comfort them? And they put his little daughter in his arms, who asks, hearing that he was her father, ‘Has God sent my father back? God is very good.’

O, good faithful mother! can this great bearded man be your son? Not often can such a cluster of loving hearts be seen — faithful to each other, believing in each other’s goodness and purity, in face of terrible adverse circumstance. Their faithfulness is a proof of their own worth. To the pure all things are pure. But hush! for Minnie’s last words; Dan is reading them aloud.

‘I have learned, too late, the consequences of my fault. But I, and I alone, am to blame. No one knew it; no one suspected it; no one aided

me in it. I am writing this upon a page of Dan's Bible, and it seems to me like an oath. I cannot live long. I am dying. But a long life's devotion could not repay Joshua's brotherly care. All good angels guard him and you! If Joshua is preserved to give you this—and I believe he will be—think, while you read it, that my spirit is near; and forgive me, dear Dan and Ellen. My love to you both, and to good Mrs. Marvel and Joshua's father; and to Susan, who must have no bad thoughts of Joshua. God bless you, and send you happiness! MINNIE.'

Dan and Joshua sit talking together until late in the night. Ellen and Mr. and Mrs. Marvel are sitting up also, but in another part of the house. They know that Dan wants to speak to Joshua of Minnie, and they leave the friends undisturbed. What is said to each other by the two faithful friends cannot be written here; but it may easily be understood by those who have read these pages. Joshua tells Dan as much as time will allow of his and Minnie's lives, and is tender and indignant in turns, as Dan relates to him the history of the family in Stepney after the sailing of the *Merry Andrew*. Be sure that the Old Sailor

is not forgotten. If tender speech and loving thought are worth anything, the Old Sailor is rich indeed.

Their eyes are wet with tears, and their hands are in each other's clasp. Joshua has just finished his relation of Minnie's death, and of her words about the river—'So restless there, so quiet here!'—when a knock comes at the door, and Ellen enters. He takes her in his arms, and they sit, the three of them, and talk in a state of wondering happiness.

Another knock at the door—Mr. and Mrs. Marvel. The magnetism of love has drawn them all together.

'It reminds me of the night before you first went to sea, Jo,' says Dan. 'Do you remember? The knocks at the door one after another.'

'Josh,' said George Marvel to his son, a fortnight afterwards, 'what are you going to do?'

'What do you mean, daddy?' asked Joshua in return.

'What do I mean? Well, you don't want to go to sea again?'

'No, I shouldn't like to leave Ellen and Dan and all of you again.'

‘ Well, then, what are you going to do ? You must do something.’

Mrs. Marvel sat silent, and smiled a little smile, but very slyly, so that no one should see it.

‘ You can get plenty of work as a wood-turner, daddy ?’

‘ Yes, Josh, a good deal more than I can do—and well paid for it too.’

‘ Well, daddy, I think——’

‘ Yes, Josh, you think——.’

‘ ——I think I’ll learn wood-turning, if you’ll teach me.’

Whereupon George Marvel, after the slightest amount of hesitation, rose and kissed his wife.

THE END.

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